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HELLFROST

• LEGENDARY ENDEAVORS •



HELLFROST



LEGENDARY ENDEAVORS

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FORGING A LEGEND



Skalds' repertoires and scholars' tomes are filled with stories of men and women whose deeds have elevated them to the status of legends. Though their bones have long turned to dust, their names echo throughout eternity. Not all legends concern creatures of flesh and blood, though. Although they are little known, there are many tales that revolve around objects rather than people, objects that have earned a name and have become legends in their own right. These objects are known collectively as legendary relics.

Only the *moðsognar*, the elder dwarves whose name is recalled only by the most erudite scholars, ever mastered the forging of relics. They did not pass on their secret to others, nor do they continue to forge relics for heroes. The relics detailed in this supplement were not made by craftsmen in ancient times—they were created by the mighty deeds of their bearers or through centuries of use for a dedicated purpose or veneration.

How does a sword used to slay a dragon develop powers which make it easier to slay dragons in the future? Why does a musical instrument once played by a master skald gain the ability to charm audiences? How does a shield worshipped as a holy item become a holy item?

In the same way that the formation of sacred places remains a mystery, so no scholar, mage, or priest understands how legendary items come into being. Many suspect there is an unknown form of magic at work, magic that causes arcane threads to attach to a legendary relic as it is used to perform heroic, or terrible, deeds. Others claim the objects hold power through a memory resonance—belief in the supposed powers of a relic actually causes those powers to manifest. Some point to the gods, claiming that only they have the power to imbue inanimate objects with such power.

The vast majority of legendary items are weapons, for warfare and combat are the breeding grounds of heroism. However, other objects can achieve this status on rare occasions. This supplement explores how to create a legendary relic, how heroes can cause one to come into being, and gives numerous examples.

DESIGNING LEGENDARY RELICS

Note that while legendary relics may be forged in the deeds of player characters, these rules are solely for the GM. The system is designed to allow the GM to create a wealth of wondrous objects, but it is not meticulously balanced—players will find ways to create an ultimate weapon if allowed to play with these rules. Of course, nothing prevents the GM from creating an ultimate weapon, but since he created it and handed it to the heroes, he must live with the consequences of his action.

In order to create a legendary relic, simply work through the steps below. You'll note that there are no random tables—the creation of a legendary relic requires deliberate thought from the GM, not the clatter of dice.

Remember as well that not all legendary items must be superpowered artifacts—a sword that grants an extra point of AP or a higher damage die is still a powerful weapon in its own right.

FORM & PURPOSE

The first step is to think about the object's form and purpose. These are the baselines from which the other details will grow.

FORM

The form is simply the physical nature of the relic. It might be a ring, a long sword, a set of bagpipes, a pair of gloves, a suit of armor, or even a ship.

Once you've got a basic idea, expand on it by adding details. Remember, the heroes aren't going to come across many of these objects, so make them stand out from the crowd of mundane objects they carry. Does a sword have etchings on the blade? Is the hilt bejeweled?

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Does a staff have a strange gem at the tip? Does armor show slight indentations from blows that would have sundered mundane armor? If you have some artistic talent, sketch the relic.

PURPOSE

All relics should have a very specific purpose, one thing at which they excel. Without a purpose, the relic is no better than a conventional magic item. Indeed, the relic's purpose is the most important aspect of the design phase, for it will directly shape its powers and history.

A sword might be renowned for slaying dragons, orcs, demons, or mages, penetrating the thickest armor, decapitating foes, deflecting magical energy, or whatever, but it should never be a generic killing weapon stacked with bonuses. A staff may boost fire magic spells and provide extra protection from fire, but it should never boost all spells or guarantee immunity from all harm.

Don't think about specific game mechanics yet—you need is a general idea of what the relic will do, and thus the part it will play in your campaign.

STATUS

Not all legendary relics, as with flesh-and-blood heroes, are equal in status. Some are known far and wide. Others are mentioned only in obscure stories known to a handful of skalds or scholars. For ease, relics are grouped into four status categories.

The category determines the overall power of the relic by limiting how many total points of powers the relic contains. As with heroes, the most powerful relics are the rarest. It should be noted that, as with conventional magic items, even the least powerful legendary relics are far from plentiful.

Once you've read through the category descriptions, pick one for your relic.

Minor: These relics are at the beginning of their journey, having been awakened only recently or used long ago to perform a single heroic deed. Their total powers are limited to a combined cost of just +3.

Lesser: Lesser relics may have been used for a few notable deeds or carried through the ages by many heroes who achieved a few heroic deeds between them. Though imbued with greater powers, their total powers are limited to a combined cost of +8.

Major: Used for a single, truly heroic deed or carried by more than one hero who, in their time, each achieved a notable but lesser deed. Their total powers may not exceed +14.

Greater: The most powerful relics are the greater ones. A small few were used for a single deed which, in some manner, forever altered the course of Rassilon's history. Most, however, have accumulated power from multiple heroes who each achieved great and noteworthy deeds. Their total powers may not exceed +20.

Note that legendary relics are not forever tied to the status the GM picks during the creation phase. The cho-

sen status represents the relic when it enters play. The more they are used to fulfill their original purpose, the stronger they become. We'll talk more about this later as it doesn't affect the creation process.

GLORY

Like heroes, relics acquire Glory as they are used to perform glorious deeds. A relic's initial Glory is equal to five times the total cost of its total powers.

The most powerful relics have often been wielded by generations of heroes. Players should be under no illusions that they truly own the relic. In many instances, the individual wielder is merely a part of the relic's long and glorious history, not the other way around. The names of individual wielders are often forgotten or become confused with other heroes, but those of legendary relics endure down the centuries.

More details on Glory and how it affects legendary relics can be found on page 8.

NAME

Legendary relics require a unique name to elevate them above the status of more conventional magic items. The name shouldn't be a generic description of the relic's function, such as "+1 long sword"—it should be an actual name relating to the item's history, purpose, and powers. A ring used to aid generations of mages specializing in fire, for instance, might be nothing more than a "ring of fire magic boosting" in terms of its abilities, but it might be known in legends as Firebrand, Firestarter, or Scorchier.

Alternatively, a relic may have a generic-sounding name prefixed by "The," thus indicating it is a one of a kind item. For instance, the GM might create The Ring of Dragons or The Helm of Kings. Additionally, relics may carry the name of their founder, such as Draymar's Pipes as their unique name. The name doesn't have to give away the relic's function.

NAMES HAVE POWER

Names have power, and this is especially true of legendary relics. Whenever a legendary relic is drawn or held, the user gains a +1 bonus to Intimidation or Persuasion rolls against those who have heard of the object. This works even if the relic has not been activated (p. 7), unless the wielder makes the fundamental mistake of revealing that its powers are not his to harness.

Naturally, this requires the deed to be told and the object to be named. While orcs may tremble at the sight of, "Orcreaver, which slew the great orc king, Arnak the Terrible," they are less likely to be bothered by a hero shouting, "I've got an orc killing sword here!"—plenty of swords have slain orcs.

In game terms, a hero who wants the bonus must announce the relic's name recount at least one of its deeds when it is drawn (a free action if roleplayed or an action if not).

HISTORY

Legendary relics were born from legends. In the same way they need a name, so they need a backstory. You can write as much or as little as you want here. At minimum, provide some basic details, such as names of people or events. The histories of the sample relics later in the supplement vary from a few lines to several paragraphs, and provide a good starting point when deciding how much you want to write.

POWERS

You have the bones of the object, but now it's time to add the flesh to your creation—its powers.

Try to avoid creating wands of fiery death and rings of invisibility. Those are fine in other fantasy settings, but not in *Hellfrost*. If you want a relic which aids fire mages, give it a bonus to arcane skill rolls with a fire trapping. A master thief's boots might grant a bonus to Stealth rolls because legends say he while he wore them sentries never heard him approach.

Very few spells should ever be permanently active, either. The GM should always think about how such a relic will impact his campaign. Ideally, think around the spell in terms of how else a relic could produce a similar power. *Regenerate*, for instance, is a very powerful spell, and allowing a hero a free Soak against every single attack for the rest of his life is going to break the game. Perhaps instead you give the relic a few bennies that can be used only to Soak, or a Vigor bonus which applies only when Soaking.

In all but the rarest cases, bonuses granted by a legendary weapon should only manifest against a specific foe or under specific circumstances. Orcreaver, for example, is a truly mighty weapon when fighting orcs, but has absolutely no special powers against giants, undead, demons, or any other creatures. A sword which doubles damage against all foes, for example, is simply too powerful and would likely ruin your campaign. (It would also attract the Reliquary in great numbers.)

Bear in mind as well that legendary weapons can be invested with evil powers as well as good. A sword used to slay a good and noble king is still legendary, but it is forever tainted with that fell deed. Once a hero attunes to a relic and activates it, he gains all its strengths and weaknesses so long as he possesses the object—and that includes Hindrances.

RESTRICTIONS

Restrictions are a way of focusing a legendary relic's power and should be assigned to reinforce the item's purpose.

The numbers in parentheses are modifiers to an individual power's cost—restrictions are always applied to individual powers, not as a blanket modifier to the entire relic's suite of abilities. No restriction can reduce the cost of a power below +1, nor can an individual power ever be reduced by more than 3 points. This doesn't prevent

you from picking restrictions which would otherwise lower a power's cost by 4 or more points, however—assign restrictions to suit the relic's purpose, not the game mechanics behind its creation.

For powers which *always* apply to a general group, such as Maintain Spell or Trait (arcane skill die) only being of use to spellcasters, treat Specific Restrictions relating to magic as General ones. For instance, picking "heahwisards" as a restriction would normally give a -2 cost modifier, as these are a specific type of user. However, since a power like Maintain Spell requires the user to be a mage in the first place, the modifier is only worth -1.

* **No Restriction (+1):** The power has no restriction on who can use it, when, and for what purpose. Having no restriction *raises* the cost of the associated power.

* **Inherent Restriction (0):** Some Edges, spells, and relic powers have an inherent defined focus. Examples include Favored Foe, Trait, or *weapon immunity*, which must be linked to a specific type of foe, Trait, or weapon by default. Such powers have no modifier unless the user or target is somehow restricted, such as having to be a dwarf or a cleric of Eira.

* **General Restriction (-1):** Powers manifest only when certain general conditions are met (making a Called Shot), against a general type of foe (undead, orcs, dragons) or against foes with a common Immunity or Resistance (such as cold), against a general type of weapon (melee, ranged, spells), or when used by a certain types of wielder (elf, Saxa, cleric, mage).

* **Specific Restriction (-2):** Powers manifest only when specific conditions are met (a Called Shot to the Head), against narrowly defined foes (liches, orc chieftains, Hellfrost dragons), against a specific type of weapon (swords, bolt spell), or when used by a specific wielder (single gender or occupation of a one race or culture, one defined trapping, heahwisards).

* **Limited Uses (-1, -2, or -3):** Certain powers, even spells, may be restricted to a number of uses per day. Activating these powers is typically a free action (but not always). As a rule of thumb, non-instant effect powers activated in this manner last for one hour, though the GM may increase the duration as he sees fit.

Three uses per day is a -1 modifier, two uses per day a -2 modifier, and a single use per day a -3 modifier.

ASSIGNING POWERS

The following section gives a selection of sample powers and their costs. This list is far from exhaustive, and GMs should consider it a starting point for designing their own powers. Numbers in parentheses are an individual power's cost. Simply pick one or more powers that suit the nature of the artifact and assign each one a suitable restriction.

Don't worry about picking the most efficient combination of powers. Taking powers that cost more than another combination can produce a suite better fitting the relic's purpose.

For instance, Scorpion's Tail's powers give it +6 damage when the attacker has the Drop, which he can easily

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achieve by spending a benny to use its One Step One Kill Edge. All told, its powers cost 11 points. A flat +6 damage bonus is not to be sniffed at, but Double Damage with a Specific Restriction (Must have the Drop) costs 8 points, while giving it Improved Trait Bonus (Fighting), Damage Bonus, and Damage Raise, all with the same restriction, only costs 7 points. Even adding Improved Trait Bonus (Stealth) to aid in sneaking up on unsuspecting foes with No Restriction only adds a further 5 points.

In the latter two cases, the user must find a way to get the Drop before he can use the weapon's abilities. As written, the dagger allows the user to get the Drop and deliver a powerful strike. Since the author's intention was to create a weapon that would allow an assassin to get close and then cut down *any* target in a single blow, the more expensive power suite better fits the purpose.

Edge, Trait, attribute, and spell powers may be chosen more than once, but must apply to different Edge, Traits, attributes, or spells each time. Similar relic power costs do not stack and you do not have to purchase lower levels first—only the highest cost and modifier applies. For instance, a suit of armor can have Armor, Improved Armor, or Greater Armor.

ARMOR/TOUGHNESS POWERS

These powers make the user harder to damage.

* **Armor (2):** The relic grants +1 Armor.

* **Armor, Improved (3):** Grants +2 Armor.

* **Armor, Greater (5):** Grants +3 Armor.

* **Toughness (4):** Grants the user +1 Toughness. Unlike Armor modifiers, AP weapons cannot reduce this.

* **Toughness, Improved (6):** Grants +2 Toughness. AP weapons cannot reduce this.

DAMAGE POWERS

These powers allow the wielder to inflict more harm on his foes, either through altering his damage dice or providing armor piercing abilities.

* **Armor Piercing (3):** The weapon has AP 1. If the weapon already has an AP rating, picking this power increases it by +1, instead.

* **Damage Bonus (6):** The weapon inflicts an extra +1d6 damage, regardless of whether or not the wielder meets the minimum Strength. A hero with Strength d4 using a great sword with this power would inflict 2d4+1d6 damage.

* **Damage Raise (3):** The relic inflicts +1d8 with a raise on the attack roll, instead of +1d6 as normal.

* **Double Damage (9):** The relic inflicts double damage. Roll damage as normal and then double the total.

* **Ignore Armor (9):** The weapon ignores all worn armor and the natural armor of beasts. It has no effect against an inanimate object's natural Toughness.

* **Increased Damage Die (3):** The damage die of the weapon increases one die type, to a maximum of d12. When calculating minimum Strength, treat the weapon as a normal item and then increase the damage by one die. For

instance, a hero with d4 Strength wielding a regular long sword does 2d4 damage. Armed with a relic long sword with this power, he would cause d4+d6.

* **Increased Damage Die, Improved (7):** As Increased Damage, except the relic's damage die increases two steps.

* **Minimum Strength (2):** The wielder ignores the minimum Strength requirement. He retains the weapon's full damage die and any special bonuses, such as Parry or Reach modifiers.

EDGE & TRAIT POWERS

When certain Edges affect other categories, such as Tough as Nails boosting Toughness, all powers relating directly to Edges and Traits are grouped here for ease.

* **Benny (4):** The relic contains a benny, which is available to the wielder. The benny "recharges" each session, exactly as a normal benny. This power may be taken more than once. In order to keep things fast, furious, and fun, all bennies should have the same restriction.

* **Edge (Novice) (3):** The item contains a single Novice Edge. A few basic rules apply when assigning Edges.

The wielder does not have to meet the requirements for an Edge in order to use it. The hero is not treated as having the Edge when taking other Edges that list it as a requirement, however. For instance, a hero who wields a sword containing Block cannot take Improved Block unless he has the Block Edge himself.

If the Edge is an "improved" version of an Edge, the "lesser" Edge must also be assigned to the object as a separate power. A ring with Improved Arcane Resistance must be imbued with Arcane Resistance first, for example.

No relic can give a hero an Arcane Background. While a relic containing a spell may have Spell Finesse, it cannot grant this power to the hero for his own spells.

Relics cannot provide material benefits, such as through Noble or Rich, or through Professional Edges, such as Iron Guild Mercenary or Pegasus Guard. Aside from this restriction, Professional Edges can be chosen so long as the mechanics fit the relic. A hero possessing a relic with a Professional Edge does not gain membership in the organization, nor does he gain the Connections Edge or Orders Hindrance.

Finally, common sense must always take precedence—a sword with Quick Draw is fine, but giving it Woodsman is not suitable.

* **Edge (Seasoned) (4):** As Edge (Novice), except the Edge is Seasoned.

* **Edge (Veteran) (5):** As Edge (Novice), except the Edge is Veteran.

* **Edge (Heroic) (6):** As Edge (Novice), except the Edge is Heroic.

* **Improved Trait (4):** The wielder gains a one die type increase to a specific attribute or skill. When using advances to learn skills, the bonus from the relic is ignored. Above d12, only a flat +1 is added, which makes Trait Bonus a better choice.

* **Improved Trait, Greater (8):** As Increased Trait, except the attribute or skill increases by 2 dice types.

* **Monstrous Ability (6):** The relic grants the user a single Monstrous Ability.

* **Trait Bonus (2):** The item grants +1 to all rolls for a single trait. For instance, a cloak may grant +1 to Vigor rolls when Soaking (Specific Restriction) and an axe may grant +1 Fighting against demons (General Restriction). However, an amulet worn by a popular ancient king may give +1 to all Persuasion rolls (Inherent Restriction).

Modifiers to attack roll *automatically* increase the weapon's damage by a similar amount, even if the user does not meet the minimum Strength requirement. For instance, a relic long sword with Trait (Fighting) grants +1 Fighting and causes Str+d8+1 damage. A hero with d4 Strength would inflict 2d4+1 damage.

* **Trait Bonus, Improved (4):** As Trait (+1), except the bonus is +2.

* **Wild Die (8):** The user's Wild Die increases one die type. Extras attuned to the relic gain a d6 Wild Die.

MISCELLANEOUS POWERS

* **Glow (2):** The relic glows. It might glow all the time (No Restriction) or within 12" of a general or specific foe (General or Specific Restriction). No line of sight is required for the latter.

The relic glows as brightly as a torch, produces no heat, and cannot be extinguished. If it glows only with regard foes, it is not fooled by *conceal*, *invisibility*, disguises, or any other attempt to mask the foe, with the sole exception of *shape change*.

* **Hindrance, Minor (-2):** Not all relics were created by good and noble deeds. Whatever act created this relic, it has left an indelible taint that affects its wielder. The user gains a specific Minor Hindrance.

The cost automatically includes the No Restriction modifier—the default setting for negative effects. A General Restriction gives this power a cost of -1, while a Specific Restriction gives it a cost of zero.

* **Hindrance, Major (-4):** As Hindrance, Minor, except the Hindrance is a Major one.

The cost automatically includes the No Restriction modifier—the default setting for negative effects. A General Restriction gives this power a cost of -3, while a Specific Restriction gives it a cost of -2.

* **Special Material (2):** The relic is made of a special material (see *Hellfrost Player's Guide*), which forms the baseline for any subsequent modifiers. For example, a star metal corselet grants +5 Armor. If the relic was assigned Armor, the total protection is now +6. This power is innate to the relic and thus has an Inherent Restriction (0) modifier.

SPELLCASTING POWERS

These powers apply equal to magic and miracles. Spells may be usable by the wielder or be an innate power which activates under set circumstances. User activated spells do not generally require a restriction. Innate spells always require a restriction related to their activation.

Spells activated by the wielder require an activation roll. This may be a suitable attribute (typically Spirit) or an actual arcane skill, depending on restrictions. Maintained spells last as normal. Relics containing wielder activated spells are not immune to the effects of the Siphoning. Loss of magical powers affects the relic, but any Shaken or wound results affect the wielder.

Relics with innate powers possess an arcane skill of d8, plus any modifiers from the Skill or Trait powers, and a d6 Wild Die. Maintained innate spells last for one hour. Innate spells never generate backlash—the power simply fails to function.

A spell which is always deemed always active in the relic, such as *environmental protection* or *immunity*, costs 1 point more if it works as per a standard success, and 2 points if cast with a raise.

* **Maintain Spell (5):** The wielder may Maintain a number of spells equal to half his arcane skill die before he suffers penalties.

* **Maintain Spell, Improved (8):** The wielder may Maintain a number of spells equal to his arcane skill die before he suffers penalties.

* **Spell (Novice) (3):** The relic contains a single Novice spell.

* **Spell (Seasoned) (4):** As Spell (Novice), except the spell is Seasoned.

* **Spell (Veteran) (6):** As Spell (Novice), except the spell is Veteran.

* **Spell (Heroic) (10):** As Spell (Novice), except the spell is Heroic.

ACTIVATION

Most legendary relics are passive devices, in that by themselves they can do absolutely nothing. A sword, for instance, grants no bonuses unless it is wielded in combat, a musical instrument must be played, and armor and other clothing must be worn.

Legendary relics not used for a long period of time become dormant. Whatever energy powers them needs a recharge before a hero can use the relic's true powers. Although they register as relics to the touch and can be attuned, their only usable ability is the power of their name. Heroes who wish to wield the full powers of the relic must learn how to activate it.

ACTIVATING & ATTUNING

A hero who touches a legendary relic recognizes it as a powerful item. Even a casual touch alerts a person to the device's nature. Those who want to actually use a relic must first activate it.

When a hero touches the item, he receives a series of mental images. In game terms, these images allow the hero to learn the name of the item, its history, and its general purpose. The vast majority of legendary items the heroes discover are dormant, however, having been neglected for generations.

In order to actually benefit from the item, the hero

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must fulfill the activation requirement (see above). Some heroes will undoubtedly experiment with the item in the hope of getting lucky. After all, Orcreaver kills orcs, so perhaps simply killing an orc will “jog its memory.” Others may prefer to research the item’s history (see below).

Once the relic is awakened, the hero must attune himself with it. In game terms, he must spend a benny to forge a bond with the device. If another character wishes to attune to the item, he too must spend a benny. A character who cannot use the device for some reason does not “waste” a benny trying. A ring that grants a bonus to arcane skill rolls, for instance, remains a mysterious but obviously magical relic to a warrior with no Arcane Background. An attuned character has full access to the awakened relic’s powers, learning them instantly.

Since any sentient creature can detect a relic simply by touching, an intelligent foe with an awakened relic in his treasury is very likely to have activated it and will wield it against the heroes.

In order for the relic to return to dormancy, it must be unused for at least a generation—just enough time for most folk to forget how to activate the object.

RESEARCH

Research involves recounting folklore or trawling through ancient tomes in a musty library.

For the former, the hero makes a Knowledge (Folklore) or Knowledge (History) roll at –4. With success, he learns the act required to reawaken the relic.

Library research naturally requires access to a library, no mean feat in Rassilon. The hero then makes an Investigation roll at –4. Whereas using Folklore or History is a one-shot chance—either you know the stories of the relic or you don’t—a hero can make Investigation rolls more than once. However, few libraries have accurate indexes, many old books are incomplete or damaged, and references may be highly cryptic. As a result, one Investigation roll may be made per week.

With both methods, the more well-known the relic, the easier it is to study. Relics impart a +1 bonus to research rolls per whole 20 points of Glory they possess. Orcreaver, which has 75 Glory, gives a hero a +3 modifier to learn its activation secret.

DEED CREATED LEGENDARY RELICS

Any item wielded by a hero can in theory become legendary, though the process is not easy. Indeed, making the process easy cheapens legendary relics and reduces their impact. While this section concerns the deeds of player characters giving birth to a legendary relic, it still holds that they should not be given access to the game mechanics for doing so.

CREATION EVENT

Legendary relics are not the work of master craftsmen. The crucible of their creation is the deeds of mortals. This section looks at how the actions of player characters can give birth to a legendary relic.

Although “evil” legendary items exist, villainous characters cannot grow them through fell deeds. Playing a villain earns no reward in *Hellfrost*. As such, only villainous NPCs can create and empower evil relics.

WEAPONS

Whenever a weapon is used to slay a truly powerful Wild Card, such as a frost giant jarl, a dragon of adult age or older, or a liche, or a large number of lesser foes in a single engagement (say 30 orc warriors) using only the item and with no assistance of *any sort* from others, the weapon can gain a place in history. This is purely at the GM’s discretion, though. As with earning Glory, the more powerful the hero, the more powerful his foe must be to qualify for this.

The hero must kill a powerful foe in a single hit and the creature must be both unwounded and active when the lethal blow was delivered. Delivering a death blow to a liche already on 3 wounds or performing a Finishing Move to an Incapacitated or sleeping dragon isn’t a legendary event. Sure, the hero killed a terrible monster and his reputation grew because he earned Glory, but the deed was insufficient to create a legendary relic.

Likewise, lesser foes cannot be Shaken, held, or otherwise impaired and then dealt a death blow. Slaying them only counts if a single blow takes them from being healthy to being dead. Again, they must be slain without any form of assistance.

Should a hero fulfill this rather arduous requirement, he gets to name his weapon. In return, it receives the +1 bonus to Intimidation and Persuasion all relics possess. His item is now on the long path to true legendary status. The creator is automatically attuned to the device.

OTHER

Only very rarely should non-weapons become legendary items. Armor and shields are both excellent candidates, but unlike weapons, it is far more subjective as to when a suit of armor has “performed” a legendary deed. As with weapons, legendary deeds require the enemy to be a powerful Wild Card or a horde of lesser foes.

Here’s an example of what it might take to invest armor with legendary status. A hero fights an adult dragon (smaller dragons shouldn’t count) and is struck by its terrible breath several times. Due to poor damage rolls or perhaps good Soak rolls, the hero suffers absolutely no damage, including Shaken results. In this instance, a legend spreads that the armor somehow protected the wearer from dragon breath (specific to one sort or maybe all species).

Items like rings, cloaks, and staffs are much harder to

arbitrate. In general, a hero must roll at least four raises on a roll while performing some noteworthy deed. Rolling a ton of raises to save a fellow hero from certain death is certainly heroic, but it is not legendary. Saving a king, however, is, if only because the king's name is already well known across the land. Here are some examples.

Perhaps a mage wearing a ring gets extremely lucky and slays a fully fit adult dragon with a single 2d6 *bolt*. Word begins to spread that the bolt actually came from the ring, not from the mage. Soon, mages from across Rassilon want to look at the ring and even offer money for it. A mundane ring has suddenly become an object of power purely because other people see it as one.

Maybe a healer rolls four raises on a Healing roll to heal a mortally injured king or similar dignitary. In game terms, she only heals two wounds (the maximum allowed), but legends are rarely based on accurate reporting and never on the limitations of game mechanics. Maybe the king's advisors speak of how a light seemed to radiate from her calfskin gloves and how their lord's wounds healed overnight, leaving no scar. Before you know it, everyone in the realm has heard the tale and wants the wearer of the magic gloves to heal them. A new legend is born.

Even if non-weapons become legendary relics, it is far harder for them to grow in power—killing is a hero's lot in life, but there are only so many kings you can save, locks you can pick, or wards you can shatter.

ASSIGNING POWERS

A newborn legendary relic gains Glory equal to twice the reward the hero earned for the deed. For every 5 whole points of Glory the relic has, it receives 1 point to spend on powers. These initial points cannot be saved. Since the points cannot be saved, it logically follows that the deed must be worth a minimum of 5 Glory to create the relic.

After the game session is over, the GM and player should work together to decide the relic's powers and purpose. The GM should explain to the player that their legendary item is at the start of its career and that its power are, for now, very limited in scope. Be honest and tell him that his relic may never actually grow in power during his character's lifetime—he has, after all, given birth to an object that will last many centuries and have many owners before it reaches maturity. Never leave the player under the illusion he is now the possessor of some major artifact capable of shattering worlds.

Players should never see the relic power descriptions or costs—ask them to describe the abilities they think the item should have in terms their character would understand.

Let's use our examples from above to get an idea of how the GM should think of relics in terms of assigning powers to player created legendary relics.

Legendary relics in *Hellfrost* should rarely fire *bolts*, so our mage's ring likely grants a bonus to arcane skills when casting *bolt*. A restriction involving the fire trap-

ping may be added to reduce the cost. As more mages use the ring over time, it could develop several Spell Finesse (*bolt*) Edges.

As for our healer's gloves, they should probably augment Healing rolls or arcane skills when casting *healing*, or perhaps contain the Healer Edge. Maybe they even allow the wearer to cast the *healing* spell, though given the nature of the creation event, the spell should be restricted to working on nobles.

In order to imbue the item with further bonuses, the hero has to perform similar deeds against similar foes (see *Growing Legendary Items*, p. 9). A sword once used to slay a dragon doesn't suddenly become legendary again because it slew a liche—once a legend is created, only events related to that legend count.

GROWING LEGENDARY ITEMS

A legendary item's power can grow over time. To represent this, relics have individual Glory scores just like mortal heroes.

When a hero earns Glory, the GM should decide if the relic is directly involved in the action and whether the deed specifically fits its purpose. If it is, the relic gains half the amount of Glory the hero earned. For instance, a hero who earns +2 Glory in a Mass Battle against orcs while wielding Orcreaver has performed a suitably heroic deed matching the sword's purpose. Orcreaver gains +1 Glory. Had the battle been against trolls, even serving under an orc chief leader or with a small force of orcs in their ranks, Orcreaver would receive no bonus. Glory rewards for legendary relics should be hard to achieve, but not impossible.

For every 5 Glory a relic earns, it gains 1 point to spend on new powers. These points may be saved, thus allowing the purchase of higher cost powers. The GM is the sole arbitrator of what new power or powers the relic gains and when. However, if the current wielder dies, the unspent points are lost. His deeds either didn't leave a lasting effect on the relic for future generations or they are forgotten or viewed as lesser deeds of little note.

ADVANCED POWERS

Some powers have Improved or Greater Improved versions. A legendary relic containing a lesser variant can be improved. When this occurs, simply subtract the base cost of the current power from the new one. All previous restrictions automatically apply to the new power level.

Advanced powers do not have to be bought in strict order—a relic can jump straight from a base power to a Greater version so long as it has the points available.

Example: *A suit of legendary chain mail contains Armor with No Restriction. This has a cost of 3 (base 2 + 1 for No Restriction). A hero later wishes to increase this to Greater Armor. Taking into account the No Restriction*

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tion, this power has a cost of 6. Subtracting the original Armor cost gives a cost of 3.

Example: The GM creates a legendary holy symbol with the Maintain Spell power that functions only for clergy of Sigel (a Specific Restriction). Its final cost is 3 (base 5 minus 2 for the restriction). A hero later wishes to take the Improved Maintain Spell power. This has a modified cost of 6. The new power has a cost of 6–3 (the base cost), or 3, and keeps the same restriction.

In both examples, the cost for the new power is exactly the same as if it had been initially assigned. Upgrading to Greater Armor, for instance, has cost a total of 6 points—3 for the initial Armor + 3 for the upgrade—exactly the same as buying Greater Armor with No Restriction.

OPTIONAL RULES

The following rules are entirely optional. Gamemasters may ignore them completely, pick one or two they like, or use the lot, as they see fit. Although dice are involved in some, the effects are best handled through roleplaying.

DESTINY PLANNED OUT

The wielder has no say in how the relic grows. Instead, the GM maps out the relic's powers up to 20 points in advance and unlocks one of his choosing when the appropriate Glory has been earned. This gives the GM more control over the relic's future powers and reminds the hero that, while he currently uses the relic as he sees fit, is not its master.

FORGOTTEN IN THE STORY

As mentioned earlier, many wielders of legendary relics are forgotten by history while the name of the relic grows. A hero who owns a legendary relic may voluntarily forfeit Glory in order to boost his relic's Glory. Instead of earning half a hero's Glory when accomplishing some great deed related to its purpose, the relic earns the full amount. The hero, on the other hand, earns only half the Glory (rounded down).

Why might a character do this? First, he may have no choice. The GM might rule that this is how legendary relics work in his game. Second, no matter how powerful he gets, the hero will not be around forever. Powering up the relic gives it a lasting legacy and increases its status in the campaign at the expense of the hero's deeds going largely unrecognized.

FULFILL MY PURPOSE

Legendary relics are not intelligent. They have no soul or brains, but they do have a desire—to fulfill their purpose. For every four points of powers, the relic gains one die type in Spirit (so d4 with 4 points of powers, d6 with 8 points, and so on up to d12 at 20 points).

If the relic's wielder avoids a chance to fulfill the relic's purpose, the relic may make an opposed Spirit roll to force the hero to serve its purpose. This is not the same as mind control—the character is not a mindless puppet, but he is driven to serve to the best of his abilities. At no time does the relic speak. Rather, the user feels the urge to attempt some goal. Treat this as the Major Vow Hindrance.

Note that relics have no concept of the magnitude of a task—Orcreaver may urge its owner to slay any orc he encounters, in the same way that the healing gloves used in our examples may “demand” their owner offers healing to any who ask.

This should not be overused, though. Employ it only if the character has failed to work toward the relic's goal over some time or shuns a major act because he feels it is not in his best interests—the relic doesn't give a fig about the hero's feelings or wants, nor that he might face certain death.

INDESTRUCTIBLE

Relics may be magical, but they are not indestructible. Orcreaver, one of the most powerful relics known, is still just a sword and has the same Toughness as mundane sword. With this rule, relics cannot be destroyed by any common means, including spells such as *bladebreaker*.

Destroying a relic requires something special, such as a major quest to throw it into a coldfire volcano in the Hellfrost core (likely with an evil relic whose destruction forms part of the campaign) or, slightly less arduously, by smashing, cutting, or otherwise harming it with another legendary relic.

If a relic can be destroyed, can it be repaired? Could Orcreaver, for instance, be reforged? It should be possible for this to happen, but again, it should not be easy. One way is for the heroes present the object to a moðsognir and ask him to make the repairs. Given the elder dwarves shun all contact with other races, this in itself should be a major quest worthy of a skalds attention.

MY PRECIOUS

Power corrupts, and the owner of a relic may become corrupted simply by possessing the object, especially if he has a low Spirit.

This corruption does not mean he will turn evil and go on a murderous rampage (unless he somehow acquired a relic that seeks that purpose, of course). Rather, the wielder becomes reluctant to let the object out of his sight, to use a similar but mundane object, and to let others touch his precious. He may start talking to the relic or calling it things like, “My beloved.” Weird, even creepy, but not inherently dangerous.

Any such feelings toward the relic take time to manifest and should be introduced slowly and subtly. When you're ready, give the player a Quirk to represent his odd behavior. Getting rid of the Hindrance is possible, but is up to the individual GM to adjudicate.

EXAMPLE RELICS



This chapter contains example legendary relics. Most hail from Rassilon, but there are a few from Al-Shirkuh and one from the Land of Water (of which the Jade Empire is but one part, albeit the largest).

Every relic shares the same basic template.

Name: The commonly known name of the relic.

Realm: The continent on which the relic was created and is most likely to be found.

Status: The relic's status category, the number of points already invested in powers, and its current Glory.

Description: A brief description of the relic's physical appearance.

History: A summary of the relic's history.

Activation: The nature of the deed required to activate the legendary relic if it is dormant.

Powers: The relic's power suite. Some relics may have a short summary before the powers listing, making it is easier to see at a glance the combined effect of multiple and varied abilities. This most commonly applies with weapons. Individual powers detail the specific power type, restrictions, and the modified cost of the power, and then a description of how the power works.

BANE WEAPONS

Realm: Any

Status: Minor; 3 points; 15 Glory

Bane weapons are a generic, low-powered legendary item designed to save the GM time. All the GM has to do is assign a unique name and a history. Most bane weapons carry simple names, such as Demonbane, Giantbane, and so on, but the GM is free to assign any name he wishes.

Description: Just about any weapon can be a bane weapon. Some are engraved with runes or glyphs, others appear quite ordinary or battle-worn.

History: Bane weapons were forged in blood. Some owe their existence to the great and terrible conflicts that have wracked the lands—Demongate Wars, the struggle against the Liche-Priest, the War of Copper Jars, the Bliz-

zard War, the Saxa Rebellion, and the Golem Uprising. Others are the result of lesser conflicts or enduring quests. Not all were created by the forces of good, for while their names are unspoken (or unknown) by civilized races, the monstrous races had their share of heroes.

All share one common trait—their first owners were renowned for their prowess against specific foes. As a result, their weapons became imbued with magic.

A small few bane weapons are still held by living heroes, Most, though, were lost, either entombed with their owners, destroyed in the wars, lost to fell foes, stolen, or simply swallowed by the mists of time and their location forgotten.

Activation: A hero must slay a member of the weapon's Favored Foe species.

POWERS

* **Edge (Novice); Inherent Restriction (3):** A bane weapon grants the wielder the Favored Foe Edge against one general type of foe, chosen by the GM. Sample bane weapon foes include Anari, demons, elementals, frost dwarves, giants, goblins, lizardmen, mages (any creature with an Arcane Background (Magic) Edge or Spellcasting skill), orcs, and undead.

BLACK SPEAR OF ELMIRIL

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Lesser; 5 points; 25 Glory

Description: A Maerathril long spear with elven runes engraved along the blade. The tip is blackened, as if scorched by some terrible fire, something no mundane flame can do to Maerathril.

History: Far back in time, long before the rise of humanity, demons ravaged Rassilon. During the Great War against Biting Darkness, as the elves call it, the elf warrior-smith Elmiril forged a great Maerathril spear and engraved on it many runes of harming and protection.

Elmiril's spear drew dark, hissing blood from many

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demons before the war was won, its tip becoming blackened and scorched as it shattered their protective spells and cast the fell fiends back to the Bottomless Pit. When Elmiril died, several lesser heroes carried the spear, using it to rid Rassilon of remaining demons or those summoned by evil spellcasters.

During the Demongate War, the demons next attempt to conquer Rassilon, the great elven hero Silithiliri was chosen to carry the spear into battle. Again, the spear wrought bloody havoc among the unholy legions. During the final battle, Silithiliri slew several powerful demons in single combat, his spear jabbing and whirling through their strongest defenses.

It has been almost a millennium since the end of the Demongate Wars. At present, the blade lies all-but forgotten in the arsenal of the Shining King.

Activation: The wielder must slay a demon. It may be a Wild Card or Extra. All damage, including physical Shaken conditions, inflicted on the demon must be caused by the spear in order for it to awaken.

POWERS

Against non-demons, the spear functions as a regular Maerathril long spear. Against demons it gives +1 to Fighting rolls and causes Str+d8+1 damage.

* **Improved Increased Damage Die; General (demons) (2):** The weapon's damage die increases to a d8 against demons. Minimum Strength remains d6.

* **Special Material (Maerathril); Inherent Restriction (2):** Due to its enhanced damage, the Maerathril tip has an arcane skill of d8 against spells cast on demons. Against other foes, it retains its standard d6.

* **Trait Bonus; General (demons) (1):** The spear gives the user +1 to Fighting and damage rolls when used against demons.

THE CLOAK OF SUSTENANCE

Realm: Al-Shirkuh

Status: Major; 9 points; 45 Glory

Description: To look at the drab gray cloak one might think it belonged to a beggar, for it is heavily patched and soiled with food and drink stains.

History: If one believed the storytellers then Suleiman owned a wardrobe fit for any emir, for he seemingly possessed dozens of cloaks and pairs of sandals.

Both creeds agree Suleiman had 12 disciples. Whether these were the first clerics or mages is subject to much dispute. Regardless, Suleiman led them into the desert to receive their training after the War of Copper Jars.

The desert is a harsh mistress and the party had taken no provisions. On the first night the disciples asked, "What shall we eat, for we are hungry?" Suleiman replied, "Good deeds nourish the soul so the flesh shall crave." With this he cast his cloak upon the sand, whereupon a simple meal appeared.

As the sun began to set, the disciples said, "We are cold. Where shall we sleep tonight?" To this Suleiman re-

plied, "Good deeds warm the soul so the flesh shall not suffer." He again cast his cloak upon the sand, but this time he transformed into a simple tent. Or so it is said.

What became of the cloak is not recorded. Some storytellers say it was gifted to one of Suleiman's disciples to sustain him as he carried the word far and wide. Others that Suleiman gifted it to a nomad family who had helped him long before. Perhaps, one day, it shall once again be gifted to a good person with simple needs.

Activation: The owner must go without food and shelter for 48 consecutive hours while constantly wearing the cloak.

POWERS

Both of the cloak's powers use a d8 arcane skill die.

* **Spell (Novice); Limited Use (1):** When the cloak is laid on the ground, it automatically casts *feast*, producing 13 pounds of simple but nourishing food once per day.

* **Spell (Seasoned); Limited Use (2):** Once per day, when laid out in the correct manner, the cloak becomes a tent capable of sleeping 13 people in relative comfort. This functions as the *refuge* power and lasts for 8 hours.

DENDRA'S GLOVES

Realm: Al-Shirkuh

Status: Major; 10 points; 50 Glory

Description: A pair of black silk gloves with Tamarni's holy symbol stitched onto each fingertip in gold thread.

History: Although she has been dead for over 80 years, every thief in Al-Shirkuh knows the name of Dendra. It was she who stole the Sultan's most precious gem from his supposedly thief-proof vault. It was she who cracked the puzzle lock on the reliquary containing the sacred idol of Shammuz housed in the god's magnificent temple in Hajjad, City of the Gods. It was she who picked the chastity belt of the emir of Sirhan's beautiful daughter so she could consummate her love with a suitor.

Despite the many stories, little is actually known about the person. Some have tried to argue she never existed, that she is actually many thieves rolled into one legend. Others claim her deeds are fictitious, stories invented to amuse the poor and scare the rich. Some of the deeds attributed to the master thief are indeed false—she never picked the gates to Jinnistan or the City of Iron, for instance—but she was a real person and she was very talented at picking locks.

She was never without her gloves, which she claimed were her lucky talisman after winning them in a game of chance against a high priest of Tamarni.

Activation: The wearer must pick a lock with a -2 or greater modifier while wearing the gloves.

POWERS

* **2 x Benny; Specific (Lockpicking only) (4):** The gloves contain two bennies. These can be used only on Lockpicking rolls.

* **Greater Improved Trait; Specific (must have the Thief Edge) (6):** The gloves increase a thief's Lockpicking by two dice types, to a maximum of d12. Above that, a flat +1 is added for each increase.

DESERT WIND

Realm: Al-Shirkuh

Status: Lesser; 8 points; 40 Glory

Description: A metal medium shield (+2 Parry) with many dents and a heavily scuffed boss.

History: The Anari conquest of what is now the Free Emirate States was swift, but the invaders suffered their fair share of defeats. During the campaign to crush the inland tribes, the Anari army was forced to cross a deep ravine spanned by a narrow stone bridge. As the vanguard approached, it met resistance in the form of a lone defender. History records his name as Lu'ay, but this is more likely an honorific—it translates from Sandspeech simply as "Shield."

Lacking missile weapons, and too impatient to wait for the rest of the force, the commander ordered his men to storm the bridge. Lu'ay slew the first three soldiers to confront him, piercing each one with his short spear. His luck seemingly expired with the fourth, who crushed his right shoulder with a his mace, rendering his weapon arm useless. Ignoring the pain, Lu'ay knocked his foe aside with his shield, sending him spiraling to his death. For five hours Lu'ay faced soldier after soldier, smashing their faces to pulp with his shield boss or shoving them into the ravine.

Lu'ay died a hero, but his death was not noble. The lone defender held out so long that the Anari main column arrived. His last victory was against the vanguard commander, who was ordered onto the bridge by his angered general. His body tumbled into the ravine, pierced by scores of arrows.

The Anari, never ones to mention their failures, made no record of the encounter. Lu'ay's story is known only because a shepherd in the nearby hills witnessed the event. The relic's name stems from this tale, for the shepherd recounted that foes were swept aside like scrub in the desert wind.

Activation: The relic must be used in combat to defend a narrow space, such as a bridge or doorway. During the combat the user must perform a minimum of 10 Push maneuvers using the shield.

POWERS

* **Edge (First Strike); Specific (push only) (1):** The wielder gains the First Strike Edge, but can only use the Push maneuver. This breaks the usual restriction that the First Strike be a Fighting attack.

* **Increased Damage Die; Specific (shield bash only) (1):** Using the relic to perform a shield bash inflicts Str+d4+2 damage.

* **Greater Improved Trait; Specific (push only) (6):** The wielder increases his Strength by two die types when performing a Push maneuver with the relic.

DRAGON SCALE SHIELDS

Realm: Any

Status: Minor; 1, 2, or 3 points; 5, 10, or 15 Glory

Description: Dragon scale shields are quite literally shields made out of dragon scales. The technique for making them is long lost.

History: Dragon scale shields are not unique items and thus their history varies immensely. Some were scavenged from dragon corpses back before the art of working dragon scale was known and have little glory. Others were from dragons slain by mighty heroes and carried into battle against other dragons of similar ilk.

All Hellfrost dragon scale shields were created in the Blizzard War, for before this time Hellfrost drakes were unknown.

POWERS

Scales from a hatchling count as a small shield, those from juvenile or adult dragons as a medium shield, and old or ancient dragon scales as a large shield.

* **Armor; Specific (trappings) (1, 1, or 3):** The shields provide an additional Armor bonus against ranged attacks with specific trappings depending on the dragon type. They also provide the increased Armor benefit against breath weapons from dragons of the same type as the scale used in their manufacture.

Forest: Earth and plant; *Hellfrost:* Cold, coldfire, and ice; *Lava:* Fire and heat; *Salt:* Acid and salt; *Sand:* Dust; *Sea:* Water; *Shadow:* Darkness; *Skaldic:* Sound; *Storm:* Air and electricity; *Sun:* Fire, heat, and light; *Undead:* Necromantic.

The bonus is equal to the dragon's Armor rating, to a maximum of +3. Any Heavy Armor rating is lost. Against other ranged attacks, they grant just the normal Armor bonus for the shield type (if any).

Example: *An old Hellfrost dragon's scale counts as a large shield. It has a total Armor bonus of +5 (+2 for a large shield + 3 for the dragon's natural armor) against cold, coldfire, and ice ranged attacks as well as Hellfrost dragon breath. Against other ranged attacks, only the standard +2 bonus for a large shield applies.*

DRAYMAR'S PIPES

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Major; 9 points; 45 Glory

Description: A finely made set of bagpipes. Along the pipes are engraved runes of discord and fear. The mouthpiece is well-worn, an indication of its frequent use.

History: The Saxa have long taken skalds into battle with them, either to inspire the men through their song magic, relay orders across the din of battle with musical instruments, or record the event.

One of the greatest skalds of yesteryear was Draymar Thoriksunu, whose specialty was invoking feelings of fear and despair in foes. At the Battle of Six Hills, Draymar's

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unit was cut off and surrounded. As the men began to panic, Draymar snatched up his pipes and charged the enemy, blaring out the mournful Dirge of Heroes as he went. The powerful tune and Draymar's lone charge caused panic among the enemy, who turned and fled. The panic spread throughout the army, giving Draymar's army victory. In later battles, Draymar refined his tactic, using it to great advantage time after time.

Unfortunately, Draymar's pipes did little good against the forces of the Liche-Priest in the final terrible engagement. Though they caused his mortal followers to flee the field, the undead whose ranks Draymar charged were unaffected. Although the victorious mortals recovered Draymar's body for entombment, his pipes were could not be found.

Activation: A hero wishing to use the pipes must know the Dirge of Heroes. Skalds making a successful Knowledge (Folklore) roll at -2 know this ancient, haunting tune. Other heroes must make the roll at -4. A hero visiting the skaldic college in Scathmoor or through the Entertainer's Guild in Spyre can learn the dirge in a week and by spending 50 gs on tuition.

POWERS

* **Alternate Skill (0):** Skalds using the pipes can substitute Song Magic for Vigor.

* **Edge (Novice); No Restriction (4):** The pipes have the Spell Finesse (Selective) Edge. A number of allies up to half the user's activation Trait die type are unaffected by the *fear* power.

* **Spell (Novice); No Restriction (5)*:** As an action, a hero can make a Vigor roll to blow the bagpipes and produce *fear* in a Large Burst Template centered on the hero. Any foes within the template are affected as per the spell. As long as the hero keeps blowing (a Vigor roll as an action each round), the *fear* effect remains, thus forcing foes in the template at the end of the musician's movement to resist each round. The hero may move and use the spell—place the template after the piper has finished his movement for the round.

The bagpipes may be used in a Mass Battle, but only once per battle. The hero must make a Vigor roll as he marches into the enemy ranks. With a success, the enemy commander makes a Morale roll at -1, -2 with a raise, whether or not his side loses a token that round. This may result in both sides fleeing.

Unfortunately, the hero must march into the enemy ranks for the pipes to be effective in this manner. Unless the hero takes a multi-action penalty to defend himself, treat his Characters Battle Result roll as a Failure.

* *Fear normally works at range. Forcing the user to place the template centered on himself is deemed a +0 modifier, as it is part of the Pipe's nature that the wearer must actually carry them into battle. Allowing the spell to be used round after round is a significant change to the standard spell, however, and warrants a +1 modifier. This would have been +2, except the user must make a Vigor roll each round (thus, the spell is not Maintained in the standard manner).*

Allowing the Pipes to be used once in a Mass Battle simply allows the spell to be used in an unusual way. It carries no extra cost.

THE ELEMENTAL RINGS

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Lesser; 8 points; 40 Glory

Description: There are four elemental rings, one for each element. The Ring of Air is a simple silver ring engraved with the rune of air that flutters and ripples like a banner in the wind. The Ring of Earth is a black marble band, decorated with an earth rune and a dozen chips of different precious stones. The Ring of Fire is a gold band with a fire rune which flickers like a flame. The Ring of Water is made of gold stained blue with alchemical dye. The water rune which adorns it ebbs and flows across the ring, moving on some unseen tide of magic.

History: After the founding of the Convocation, the first arkhwisards appointed to the Four each crafted a ring as a symbol of their office. These rings were mundane items at first, passed down through the ages from arkhwisard to arkhwisard to denote their status. Slowly but surely, the awesome power of the arkhwisards leached into the rings, altering them from mundane objects into legendary relics.

Six hundred years after they were forged, all four rings were lost during the cataclysmic Blizzard War, when the four senior arkhwisards died in battle. The rings' current whereabouts are unknown. Both the Convocation and Reliquary has teams of agents devoted to recovering these lost relics.

Activation: Each ring must be left in the heart of an elemental nexus of the appropriate type for 24 hours.

POWERS

* **Improved Trait Bonus; Specific (elementalists); Specific (one element) (1):** Each ring grants +2 to Elementalism rolls, but only for the matching element.

* **Maintain Spell; Specific (elementalists); Specific (one element) (2):** An elementalist casting spells from the element matching the ring may Maintain a number of spells equal to half his Elementalism die before suffering penalties.

For instance, a fire mage with Elementalism d8 wearing the Ring of Fire can Maintain four powers for the fire elemental spell list with ease. If he also Maintains two spells of a different element, he still suffers a -2 penalty to all Elementalism rolls.

* **Wild Die; Specific (elementalists); Specific (one element) (5):** Each ring increases the user's Wild Die by one die type, but only for Elementalism rolls and only when the spell cast matches the ring's element. Extras gain a d6 Wild Die.

THE HRAFN BANNER

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Major; 14 points; 70 Glory

Description: A long, green banner emblazoned with a black raven, the heraldic design of the Saxa kings.

History: Before the Anari invaded, the Saxa were a unified people under a High Cyning. Unification came not through peace, however, for the Saxa have always preferred to settle disputes with violence before words. High Cyning Angwulf Hrafnsumu, the first High Cyning, united the tribes only after a long and bitter campaign.

His army marched under the Hrafn Banner. Angwulf was a skilled leader, one who were he alive today would be an icon among the Knights Hrafn. Battle after battle, he lead his army to victory, sometimes outnumbering his foes and winning easily, but more often than not facing poor odds and emerging victorious only through his tactical genius.

In later campaigns, Angwulf left his generals to fight the remaining tribes who refused to bow. Whenever they marched under the Hrafn Banner they emerged victorious. Legends quickly arose around the banner. Victories were attributed not to the skill of the generals, but to the presence of the banner. Sadly, its powers still required the bearer to have a modicum of tactical knowledge.

When the Anari invaded, the impetuous and untalented High Cyning, Erwin Svensunu, totally convinced the banner would grant him an easy victory, met the invasion force with a small group of huscarls. The entire Saxa army was slaughtered and the banner carried back to the Imperial City as a gift for the emperor.

The last anyone knew the banner was in the Imperial City when the Hellfrost armies struck. However, some legends claim a Saxa slave stole the banner and carried it back to the mainland before the destruction. Folklore from the Cairn Lands tells of a minor Saxa noble who carried a green banner to battle against the Liche Priest, but none can say whether this was the Hrafn Banner or where that noble was buried.

The Knights Hrafn are interested in gaining this relic, something which puts them at odds with the Reliquary (who fear its presence would result in one nation trying to conquer Rassilon), as are the Vestmark Saxa (who want it to use against the orcs) and agents of Nagrat (who want to destroy it before it can be wielded against their master's legions).

Activation: A Saxa noble with the Command Edge must carry the war banner into a mass battle and lead the army to victory.

POWERS

The Hrafn Banner grants the general of an army +2 to Knowledge (Battle) rolls if the bulk of his army are Saxa. In addition, a Saxa noble who carries the banner gains the following Edges: A Few Good Men, Command, Death Before Dishonor, Hold the Line, and Inspire.

* **Improved Trait Bonus; General (Saxa) (3):** The Hrafn Banner grants the general of an army +2 to Knowledge (Battle) rolls if more than 60% of his army are Saxa.

* **Edge (Novice); Specific (Saxa noble) (1):** A Saxa noble wielding the banner gains the Command Edge.

THE RELIQUARY

While the Reliquary believes that all permanent relics are a danger and should be locked away, legendary relics are a special case—these are magic items with a purpose, and weak-minded mortals can, on occasion, be swayed to fulfill that purpose.

Within the Citadel, a team of dedicated Arcanologists pour over old records for hints as to the location of these fabled relics. Any clue, no matter how small, warrants the despatch of a team of Reliquae to investigate.

In most cases, Reliquae prefer to steal relics from their owners rather than resort to bloodshed. In the matter of legendary relics, they are authorized to use any and all means to acquire possession of the artifact. The wording is loose enough that the organization can maintain its claim that it does not officially sanction assassination as a means of relic retrieval.

* **Edge (Heroic); Specific (Saxa noble) (4):** A Saxa noble wielding the banner gains the A Few Good Men Edge.

* **Edge (Veteran); Specific (Saxa noble) (3):** A Saxa noble wielding the banner gains the Cry Havoc Edge.

* **Edge (Veteran); Specific (Saxa noble) (3):** A Saxa noble wielding the banner gains the Death Before Dishonor Edge.

HRIMBRECAN

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Major; 11 points; 55 Glory

Description: This long, slender spear is tipped with a blue-metal tip.

History: Carried by Arthan Gulver, founder of the Hearth Knights, Hrimbreca ("Icebreaker") grew in power as Gulver performed greater and greater deeds against the dread minions of the Hellfrost. By the time of its loss, the inhabitants of the Hellfrost greatly feared the relic.

Hrimbreca was lost a decade before Gulver's death, during an expedition to rid the Whitedrake Mountains of a particularly fearsome Hellfrost dragon. According to Hearth Knight myth, Gulver thrust the spear into the dragon's heart and could not withdraw it. The beast then took to the air, and was last seen heading north. Whether the dragon survived, and what happened to Hrimbreca, remains a mystery the Knights would long to solve.

Activation: Hrimbreca must be used to slay a Wild Card creature with Immunity or Resistance (Cold). The wielder need not kill the creature in a single blow, but Hrimbreca must be the only weapon used to physically harm the beast. (Other heroes can still use non-damaging spells, Tricks, Tests of Will, and such like to aid their comrade).

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POWERS

Hrimbrekan is a long spear. Against creatures with the Immunity or Resistance (Cold) abilities it grants +1 Fighting and causes Str+2d6+1 damage.

*** Damage Bonus; General (Hellfrost inhabitants) (5):** Causes an extra d6 damage against creatures with the Immunity or Resistance (Cold) abilities.

*** Improved Armor; General (cold trapping) (2):** The wielder has +2 Armor against any arcane power with a cold, coldfire, or ice trapping, as well as “natural” attacks of this sort, like a Hellfrost dragon’s breath or a coldfire elemental’s touch.

*** Spell (Seasoned); Specific (on ice) (2)*:** When standing on ice, a hero can thrust the spear into the ground and invoke the name of Arthan Gulver as an action. With a successful Spirit roll, a jagged crack zigzags out from the point of impact to a spot chosen by the hero within 24”.

Place a Small Burst Template over the chosen spot. The ice under the template takes 3d6 damage. Should the ice break, any creatures within the template must make an Agility roll at –2 or drop through the ice. If the ice lies above solid ground, such as on an ice plain (rather than being a frozen river or covering a crevasse), foes who fail their Agility roll suffer 3d6 damage as the ice explodes upward in a shower of razor sharp shards.

*** Trait Bonus; General (Hellfrost inhabitants) (1):** Grants +1 to Fighting and damage rolls against creatures with the Immunity or Resistance (Cold) abilities.

*** Trait Bonus; General (Hellfrost inhabitants) (1):** The holder gains +2 to Intimidation rolls against inhabitants of the Hellfrost. This includes any creature with the Immunity or Resistance (Cold) abilities. Against other folk, the spear grants +1 to Intimidation because of its legendary status.

** This power was based on blast. The fixed Small Burst Template and shorter range warranted a –1 modifier.*

LICHE-PRIEST’S TALISMANS

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Lesser; 5 points; 25 Glory

Description: A flat, black crystal skull about the size of a clenched fist.

History: During the height of the Liche-Priest’s terrible reign he crafted a number of talismans for his most trusted lieutenants. Over time, the fell essence of the lieutenants, liches, greater vampires and royal hagbui, tainted the talismans with fell energy.

Many of the Liche-Priests’ lieutenants were slain during the final battles and their talismans lost to history. Exploration of the Liche-Priest’s former realm may reveal clues to the location of a talisman. Of course, some may have already been discovered, and are perhaps already in the hands of other liches, or maybe bandits who use their power to control their minions.

Clergy of Scaetha, who are well-versed in the history of the Liche-Priest, will attack the wearer of one of these talismans without question

Activation: These relics automatically activate for clergy of Hela or Wild Card Undead. Other creatures must perform a heinous deed while wearing the relic.

POWERS

*** Improved Trait Bonus; No Restriction (5):** Anyone wearing a talisman gains +3 to Intimidation rolls. (This is a +2 bonus stacked on top of the relic’s innate +1 bonus).

ORCREAVER

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Greater; 18 points; 90 Glory

Description: Orcreaver is a great sword of frost dwarf design whose smooth blade is stained dark green with the blood of countless orcs. Carved into the crossbar are runes of vengeance.

History: Dwarves and orcs have long been enemies, and have fought many bitter and costly wars throughout the ages. Eight centuries ago, orcs ambushed King Raglan Redmane as he returned to Karad Khan for a state visit to Karad Marn, cutting him down and butchering his family before the king’s remaining huscarls drove them back.

Only one son, Thane Vestri, remained alive, for he had stayed in Karad Marn due to illness. Shamed that he was not present at his father’s side, Vestri traveled to Karad Khan once he had recovered to collect the swords of his father and brothers.

Over a coldfire forge, he smelted the blades down and reforged them into a single weapon, imbuing it with his undying hatred of orcs. When the blade was completed, he gathered his loyal bodyguards and marched into the stronghold of the orcs responsible for his kinsmen’s untimely death.

Though many of his men fell, Vestri waded through the orcs, his blade glowing brightly as it bathed in orc blood. At last he reached the throne room of Arnak the Terrible, the greatest orc king to have walked Rassilon until the rise of Nagrat. Arnak sneered at the sight of the thane, badly wounded and alone. That smile remained frozen on his lips as, with a single blow, Vestri severed the orc’s head from his shoulders. The remaining orcs broke and fled into the mountains, their strength broken.

Vestri returned alone to Karad Khan, where he died of his wounds a few days later, refusing all attempts to heal him. Vestri was entombed in the Hall of Heroes, an honor reserved only for the greatest kings and heroes. Orcreaver, as the blade became known, was buried alongside him.

Karad Khan now rests in orcish hands. What fate has befallen Orcreaver, the greatest of the dwarven blades, is unknown. Perhaps it has remained safe, for deadly traps and cunning stonework guarded the Hall of Heroes. Or maybe it now lies in the hall of the great city’s new ruler, a taunt to all dwarf that their days are numbered.

Activation: Orcreaver activates only after it decapitates a Wild Card orc. In game terms, the blade must be

used to make a Called Shot to the head that slays the orc. The orc may already be injured, and others may help in the fight.

POWERS

Orcreaver is a great sword. It grants +1 to all Fighting and damage rolls against orcs.

* **Double Damage; Specific (Called Shot to the head); General (orcs) (6):** When making a Called Shot (–4) to an orc's head, Orcreaver causes double damage. Add the +4 for the Called Shot after doubling.

* **Glow; General (orcs) (1):** The blade glistens with green fire (treat as a non-heat-producing torch) when orcs are within 12" (24 yards). The blade cannot be fooled by *invisibility*, *obscure*, or other attempts to conceal one's presence.

* **Ignore Armor; General (orcs) (8):** When wielded against orcs, Orcreaver ignores all armor.

* **Minimum Strength; General (dwarves) (1):** Dwarves who wield the blade ignore the minimum Strength requirement (thus, a dwarf with d4 Strength causes d4+d10+1 damage).

* **Trait Bonus; General (orcs) (1):** Grants an extra +1 to Fighting and damage rolls against orcs.

* **Trait Bonus; General (orcs) (1):** Gives the wielder +2 to Intimidation rolls against orcs and +1 Intimidation against other foes.

RED RUIN

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Lesser; 7 points; 35 Glory

Description: Red Ruin is a battle axe. The head is stained with a patina the color of blood, which no amount of polishing can remove. The stain deepens whenever the weapon inflicts a wound as Red Ruin consumes their blood, only to lessen if it heals its wielder. At the end of any fight in which the axe is used to kill someone, the wielder finds his hands are drenched in blood, even if he is wearing gauntlets.

History: Red Ruin was forged in bloodshed. Not the bloodshed of honorable combat, but the wanton slaughter of countless innocents.

Wielded by generations of Dargar's remorseless paladins to commit atrocious acts, the battle axe has taken on an unholy urge to butcher and maim, which it imparts on its user. Many of its powers were actually absorbed from its wielders, rabid dogs who seek only to destroy the weak. Desperate to consume blood on a base instinctive level (the blade has no intelligence to speak of), Red Ruin has found a way to force its owner to commit acts of murder—it denies them immunity from wounds while in a berserk state, but offers the chance of healing if they take a life using its keen edge.

Fortunately for the citizens of Rassilon, Red Ruin is currently lost to the cult of Dargar. Were it resurface, its reign of terror would no doubt begin swiftly, for it has not tasted blood in many centuries.

Activation: Red Ruin must be used to murder an unarmed noncombatant in cold blood.

POWERS

Red Ruin is a battle axe. It causes normal damage except when its user is berserk, at which time its damage becomes Str+d8+d6.

* **Damage Bonus; Specific (while berserk) (4):** Red Ruin inflicts an additional d6 damage if the user is currently berserk.

* **Edge (Novice); No Restriction (3)*:** Whoever wields the weapons gains the Berserk Edge. However, he suffers wound penalties as normal. A wielder who already has Berserk still suffers wound penalties—Red Ruin demands blood.

* **Edge (Veteran); Specific (while berserk) (3):** The wielder gains the Improved Frenzy Edge when using Red Ruin and berserk.

* **Major Hindrance; No Restriction (–4):** The first time the wielder uses Red Ruin to kill someone he gains the Bloodthirsty Hindrance. Ridding oneself of the Hindrance requires forsaking Red Ruin and undergoing a quest set by the cult of Eira to atone for the lives the hero has taken while under the axe's terrible influence.

* **Spell (Novice); Specific (while berserk) (1):** Red Ruin casts *healing* on its wielder each time he kills someone using the axe. It has an arcane skill of d8 and a d6 Wild Die for this purpose only.

* *Berserk grants several benefits, one of which is ignoring all wound penalties. Although this has been removed, Red Ruin provides a bloody way for the user to heal himself. Because of this, and because it fits the relic's purpose, the cost of the Edge has been reduced by only a single point.*

SCAETHA'S BLADES

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Major; 9 points; 45 Glory

Description: Long swords carved with runes of life and severing.

History: When Scaetha took up the mantle of leading the crusade against Hela, she granted her 12 most devout mortal paladins a special blade to aid their fight against the undead. (The Compact having already been broken, the other gods, Thrym included, ignored her transgression.)

The blades survived the campaign against the Liche Priest and the Blizzard War, but centuries of fighting against undead have taken their toll. Four of the blades remain in the hands of paladins, two are kept in storage at Deathwatch Fort, waiting for worthy paladins to be awarded them, and the remaining six are lost. The most likely location to find them is in the Withered Lands, as part of a liche's treasure haul.

Activation: The four blades in use are already active. The others are activated by delivering the killing blow against a Wild Card undead capable of defending itself.

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POWERS

These blades function as regular long swords against creatures without the Undead special ability. Wielded against undead, a hero gains +1 to Fighting and inflicts Str+d8+1 damage. A cleric of Scaetha who wields one against an undead has +2 to Fighting rolls and inflicts Str+d12+2 damage.

* **Glow; General (undead) (1):** When drawn, the blades flicker with blue flame if an undead is within 12" (24 yards). The blade cannot be fooled by *obscure*, *invisibility*, or other attempts to conceal one's presence.

* **Trait Bonus; General (undead) (1):** Grants +1 to Fighting and damage rolls against undead.

* **Improved Trait Bonus; Specific (clergy of Scaetha) (2):** In the hands of a cleric of Scaetha, the blades grant +2 to Fighting and damage against undead.

* **Improved Increased Damage Die; General (undead), Specific (clergy of Scaetha) (4):** Wielded against undead by a cleric of Scaetha, the blades inflict Str+d12 damage.

* **Spell (Seasoned); Specific (follower of Scaetha), Specific (necromantic spells) (1):** When wielded, followers of Scaetha also receive a free *dispel* against any necromantic trapping spell cast against them. This functions even for area effects spells, leaving the wielder unaffected while others suffer. The blade has a d8 arcane skill and d6 Wild Die for this purpose only.

THE SCORPION'S TAIL

Realm: Al-Shirkuh

Status: Major; 11 points; 55 Glory

Description: This dagger is made of blackened steel. The blade takes the form of a scorpion's tail, giving it a very distinctive appearance.

History: Created by the scorpionmen in ages past, the Scorpion's Tail was used to strike down the Anari governor of Al-Shirkuh in broad daylight. Disguised as a humble servant, the assassin moved to within a few feet of the governor and his bodyguards, all of whom had blades drawn, while they paraded through town.

Although he was spotted, eyewitness recounted that the assassin nimbly avoided all their blows before plunging the dagger into the governor's heart, striking him dead. In the confusion, the assassin escaped.

For many centuries since, the blade was gifted to any member of the Brotherhood of Assassins assigned to strike down a high profile target. Some legends claim it currently lays in the armory of the Scorpion's Nest, patiently waiting for the day when another target of great status will taste its sting. Others are more hopeful, claiming the dagger was destroyed after the assassin wielding it was cut down by vigilant guards. A related story has the blade on display in the Sultan's palace, a memento of a failed attempt on the life of one of his predecessors.

Activation: Activating the Scorpion's Tail requires it to be used to kill three intelligent beings. The attacker must get the Drop and kill his victim with a single strike.

The first time this is done the Assassin Edge is activated. The second activates the One Step One Kill Edge, and the third the free benny.

POWERS

* **Benny; Specific (activating Edge) (2):** The weapon contains one benny. This can only be used to activate the One Step One Kill Edge.

* **Edge (Novice); No Restriction (4):** The weapon grants its wielder the Assassin Edge.

* **Edge (Veteran); No Restriction (7):** The weapon grants its wielder the One Step One Kill Edge.

SHIN-BREAKER

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Minor; 3 points; 15 Glory

Description: A heavy maul of frost dwarf manufacture. Dozens of notches are scratched into its head, each mark representing a giant slain by the mighty weapon.

History: Frost dwarves, who neither crave praise nor believe they have anything to prove, rarely relate the stories of their wars to other races. Such is the case with the War of Shaking Mountains, a conflict fought long before the rise of men.

What started the war is now forgotten, but it was a long and brutal affair, fought in the remote high mountains of the world. The conflict produced many heroes, but none as famous as Hreiðmarr Rockbreaker. A humble miner, Hreiðmarr was drafted into the dwarf army of Karad Marn.

The dwarves and giants had arrayed their forces in a narrow valley. Out of the giants' ranks stepped their champion, a colossal beast with an axe as long as three dwarves. Such was the sight that the dwarven nobles and huscarls quailed when he shouted out a challenge—a duel of champions to determine victory.

Hreiðmarr stepped forward, though he always said he had no idea what possessed him to face such a foe. The giant, arrogant and proud, laughed at the sight of the miner dragging his maul behind him. "Look me in the eye as an equal," he boomed, "and I shall acknowledge your victory."

Without hesitating, Hreiðmarr stepped up, swung his maul with all his might, and shattered first the giant's left shin and then the right. Forced onto all fours, the giant could only stare in horror as the lone dwarf accepted his surrender, shortly before smashing the giant's head to pulp. Seeing their champion slain by so lowly a dwarf, the giants routed.

Hreiðmarr never again went to war, and, as far as anybody knows, his maul was never again wielded against giants. He returned to the mines and died in a rock fall many decades later. His humble origins and refusal to accept praise and reward did not stop his name becoming legend, nor his mortal remains being interred among the great heroes of Karad Marn.

As far as the dwarves know, his maul still lies with his bones, somewhere in the crypts of Karad Marn, crypts

that are in orc hands. The weapon is actively being sought both by the frost dwarves, the Order of Jotundauðr, and the cult of Goðjaðarr.

Activation: Shin-Breaker must be used to make a Called Shot to the leg of a giant that inflicts a wound (after any Soak attempt).

POWERS

* **Damage Bonus; General (giants); Specific (Called Shot to the leg) (3):** When used to make a Called Shot to the leg of a giant, Shin-Breaker inflicts an additional +1d6 damage. This stacks with the damage bonus from the Giant Killer Edge, should the wielder possess it.

SIGEL'S EYE

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Major; 9 points; 45 Glory

Description: The relic is a holy symbol of Sigel. Forged from solid gold, it is approximately 6" across.

History: The Demongate Wars were a dark time for the civilized races, both figuratively and literally. As the dark tide of demons swarmed over the earth, so their fell magics caused the skies to darken.

Elodach ap-Gerbers, an Anari-Tuomi novitiate of Sigel, had the misfortune to be sent to war during the early days of the conflict, when the tide of battle was set firmly against the mortal races. Little more than scared girl, she was present at the now infamous Battle of Lost Hope.

Arrayed in a narrow valley, the allied mortal army planned to defend the pass to the last man in order to buy the settlements behind them time to prepare for the onslaught. The Knights Hrafn know that no plan survives contact with the enemy, and that day was no exception. Faced with an army of hellish fiends, most of the army broke and ran.

Elodach was one of those who stood her ground. Eyewitness accounts tell that she raised her holy symbol before her and prayed to Sigel. A ray of light a brilliant as the sun burst forth from her holy symbol, incinerating demons as if they were dry straw put to the torch. For six hours the young cleric held the army of demons at bay, never wavering in her faith or duty.

Late in the afternoon two miracles were recorded. First, news of Elodach's steadfast defense had reached the routed soldiers. Spurred on, they returned to the field of battle with renewed hope in their hearts. Second, the clouds parted and the rays of the sun shone down for the first time in long weeks.

Their forces depleted, and with Sigel now showing his presence in the heavens, the demonic army broke. Elodach did not live to see the victory. Utterly spent by the hours of exertion, she collapsed and died as the first ray of the sun struck her.

It is accepted in the cult that Elodach's soul was immediate carried to Sigel's hall, where she was given a place of honor at his feasting table. Since her death, she has become the focus for a hero cult. She grants *boost trait* (Spirit and Vigor).

Her holy symbol was placed in the temple of Sigel in Asper. Brought out in the war against the Liche-Priest and the Blizzard War, it disappeared when the temple was destroyed during the Golem Uprising. Many clerics believe Sigel took it to the heavens.

Activation: Sigel's Eye must be exposed to the sun for 24 continuous hours. Since this is impossible (without being able to travel at exceptionally fast speeds), the solution requires creative thinking from the heroes.

Since Sigel is the personification of the sun, one solution might be to hang it around the neck of a statue of the sun god. Another would be to place it facing a conventional holy symbol of Sigel, which takes the form of a stylized sun disc.

POWERS

* **Edge (Novice); Specific (worshipper of Sigel) (1):** Whoever wields Sigel's Eye can produce a burst of intense light than harms supernatural evil creatures by concentrating. The functions as the Holy Warrior Edge. The holder must use his Faith die with the Edge.

* **Glow; Specific (worshipper of Sigel) (1):** In the hands of a worshipper of Sigel, the holy symbol produces a constant glow. The light produces no heat and illuminates the surrounding area as a torch.

* **Greater Improved Trait; Specific (worshipper of Sigel with no Faith) (6):** Worshippers of Sigel who are not clerics gain Faith d6 for the purposes of using the relic's Holy Warrior Edge and *burst* only. Clerics of Sigel gain no bonus.

* **Spell (Novice); Limited Uses; Specific (worshipper of Sigel) (1):** Three times per day, any worshipper of Sigel can produce a damaging *burst* of light. The holder must use their Faith to activate the spell.

SIPHON

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Major; 14 points; 70 Glory

Description: A Maerathril dagger with a blade etched with Draconic runes of negation, magic, and death.

History: Greatly and wisely feared by mages of all ilks, the dagger known as Siphon, despite its name, has no relation to the Siphoning.

Forged a mundane weapon by the cult of Null as an assassin's blade, Siphon earned its name and its status as a relic in -603. Seven years after the foundation of the Convocation, the first members of the Four were cut down by the blade, an event known as the Night of Severed Threads. Very few scholars have heard of it, for all mention of that dark night was later expunged from the Convocation's archives.

The assassinations prompted to the War of No Colors, a long and bitter crusade led by the cult of Maera at the urging of the Convocation against Null's crazed cultists. Null's cult was believed destroyed, but its enemies suffered grievous losses.

Siphon gained its name during the war, when a rumor

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arose that it sucked the magic from its victims. While it does have an inherent ability to *dispel*, it has no power to drain magic. The blade was believed destroyed in the struggle, but again, this was based of hearsay rather than hard fact.

The cults of Maera and Null, the Reliquary, and the Justiciary all desire possession of the blade.

Activation: A cleric of Maera must cast *dispel* on Siphon. This has no effect on the relic. Rather, it awakens it from its slumber.

POWERS

Siphon is a Maerathril dagger. Its inherent *dispel* power has an arcane die of d6+1.

Any mage, but not cleric, who touches Siphon is automatically subjected to its *dispel* power each round he maintains contact. This applies even if he wears gloves.

* **Damage Bonus; General (mages) (5):** Siphon inflicts +1d6 damage against mages.

* **Improved Trait; Inherent Restriction (4):** Siphon's inherent *dispel* die is increased one die type.

* **Special Material; General (mages); Inherent Restriction (1):** Siphon is made of Maerathril. Its *dispel* has no effects on miracles, though.

* **Trait Bonus; Inherent Restriction (4):** Siphon's inherent *dispel* roll as a +1 bonus.

SPELL GUARD

Realm: Al-Shirkuh

Status: Major; 10 points; 50 Glory

Description: A round medium metal shield (+2 Parry). Save for Ishkar's (minor goddess of magic) holy symbol on the boss, it is otherwise unadorned.

History: During the civil war led by the cult of Tammuz, Ahmose a soldier, fought against the tainted rulers of Hekata and their fell armies. During one battle, his general's command unit came under sustained assault by necromancers. Fell energy smote his bodyguards and brought the general to his knees. Too weak to defend himself, he could do naught but await a painful death as a khem-hekau mage prepared to unleash a trio of deadly bolts.

As the mage began casting, Ahmose ran across the battlefield, throwing himself shield first in front of his general. The black bolts crashed into the shield instead of the general's flesh. For 20 minutes, Ahmose stood over his commander, deflecting spell after spell until reinforcements arrived to carry the general to safety.

Ahmose's ultimate fate is unknown, for despite his moment of fame he faded into obscurity. Legends abound the shield was carried to Magor, where it was wielded against the jinn to good effect. An inscription unearthed in the Jinn Lands makes mention of an "accursed shield no magic could penetrate" brought back as war booty to the jinn's homeland following their victory over Magor, but no accurate description is given, nor do the writings tell of what became of the shield.

Activation: The shield must be wielded in battle against a creature capable of casting arcane powers. In-

nate powers that otherwise resemble spells do not count for this purpose. The wielder must be targeted by five offensive spells during the conflict and suffer no ill effect in order for Spell Guard to activate.

POWERS

* **2 x Edge (Novice); No Restriction (8):** The shield grants its user Improved Arcane Resistance. For this to function, the shield must be held as if in melee.

* **Special; Specific (bolt) (2):** A spellcaster must subtract the shield's Parry bonus from his arcane skill roll when casting *bolt* against its wielder.

STAFFS OF THE MAGE-PRINCES

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Greater; 19 points; 95 Glory

Description: All heahwisard staffs resemble a standard quarterstaff, save they are gnarled and have runes of power etched along them.

History: The dozen surviving apprentice heahwisards who founded the Magocracy each carried a heahwisard's staff. During the early years, as the apprentices became masters in their own right and founded the magocratic dynasties, these became legendary relics.

To stop lesser houses usurping power, tradition quickly formed that no noble household could rise to the status of having a Mage-Prince unless it possessed a master heahwisard's staff. Thus, as family lines divided, there were always 12 ruling houses at the core of the Magocracy. Since each staff's major power only works on those of lower social rank, the Mage-King does not hold a master staff as a precaution against abuse of power.

Through warfare, treachery, carelessness, and accidents, six of the staffs were lost, resulting in the owning families falling in status. It is for this reason that today the Magocracy has just six ruling houses and myriad smaller houses (one house actually has two staffs, meaning only five are truly missing, though this is not common knowledge).

Any house which gained possession of a master staff would, according to the ancient laws, immediately rise in status, the family head becoming a Mage-Prince in his own right and therefore being eligible for consideration as Mage-King. For this reason, the lesser houses pay very close attention to rumors regarding the lost staffs. Most houses would prefer to use legal means to acquire such a staff, but a few will go to any length to achieve power.

No one knows where the missing staffs have gone. Some may already be in the hands of the Reliquary, who see these as true relics (unlike regular heahwisard staffs). Others may be in the ruins of the numerous settlements destroyed since the Ice Rise, or in the hands of fell creatures who slew the last owner.

Activation: The staffs currently held by the houses are already active. The missing ones require a heahwisard to score two raises when casting puppet on a Mage-Baron or higher noble while holding the staff. Double raises against nobles not of the Magocracy have no special effect.

POWERS

Each staff has the following basic statistics: Damage Str+d8, AP 2, +1 Parry, Reach 1, requires 2 hands). Damage was increased through the Augment Staff Edge.

* **Backlash; General (heahwisard) (7):** A heahwisard who holds a master's staff suffers no Backlash. This is a unique power and has been found in no other legendary relic to date (unless the Reliquary has something stored in its vaults).

* **Edge (Novice); General (heahwisard); General (puppet) (1):** The staff has the Spell Finesse (Arcane) Edge. The mage treats his Wild Die as one die type higher when casting *puppet* when holding the staff.

* **Edge (Novice); General (heahwisard); General (puppet) (1):** The staff has the Spell Finesse (Range) Edge. The mage treats his Smarts as one die type higher for the purposes of range when casting *puppet* when holding the staff.

* **2 x Edge (Novice); General (heahwisard) (4 total):** The staff has been enchanted twice with the Augment Staff Edge to increase its damage. This only functions for heahwisards using the staff.

* **Special (0):** Unlike normal staffs, which lose their power on the death of their owner, the master staffs retain their potency and can be bonded to a new owner.

* **Spell (Veteran); General (heahwisard); General (lower social status) (4):** Each staff contains the *puppet* power, which any heahwisard can use, regardless of Rank. The caster must use his own arcane skill. However, *puppet* can only be used against characters with a lower social status than the mage. For these purposes only, any non-heahwisard ranks as being lower status (even a king).

* **Improved Trait; General (heahwisard); General (puppet) (2):** The wielder increases his Heahwisardry skill by one die type when casting *puppet*. The modifier applies if the wizard is casting the spell from the staff or his personal repertoire.

SWORDBREAKER

Realm: Rassilon

Status: Lesser; 6 points; 30 Glory

Description: A full set of Anari plate armor (corselet, bracers, greaves, and full helmet). The breastplate is inscribed with a sword pointing downward and a sun dragon coiled around the blade. Numerous dents and scratches cover the armor, a legacy of its origins and purpose.

History: Forged during the dark days of the Liche-Priest's reign, Swordbreaker was worn by Emeric ap-Serin, one of the greatest Anari folk heroes. Legends tell that Emeric took part in many battles yet suffered no wounds. Whether this was skill, blind luck, fate, or some combination cannot be known, for any factual evidence has long been replaced by hearsay and mythological additions to the story.

During one particular battle, one recorded in surviving historical texts, Emeric served as part of the emperor's bodyguard. A small undead force had flanked the Anari

lines near Aspiria and was now battling the emperor's guards in fierce hand-to-hand combat.

A barrow dweller, perhaps an ancient Saxa king in life, armed with a fell runic blade broke through the ranks and charged the emperor. Half a dozen of his elite guards were slain trying to stop the fearsome undead warrior's advance. As the undead swung his blade at the emperor, Emeric, knowing he faced certain death, threw himself in front of the blow.

The runic weapon, a blade reportedly enchanted to penetrate any armor, shattered on impact, leaving Emeric unharmed. Now unarmed, the barrow dweller quickly fell to the blows of the other bodyguards.

Emeric's armor, despite later claims it could deflect any blow, was not impervious. The hero suffered many wounds in his lifetime, though most stories casually ignore these incidents. Exactly how Emeric died isn't clear. A myth has arisen that a traitor in the Anari army stabbed him with a poisoned blade while he was cleaning his armor. Those less inclined to believe folk tales suspect the great hero, like so many before and after him, died in battle.

Emeric was buried in western Rassilon, most likely in Aspiria or Chalcis, which at the time were bastions of civilization in the face of the Liche-Priest's destructive conquests. Several temples to Scaetha hold rival claims that an unmarked grave in their grounds holds the hero's physical remains and his legendary armor. The tenets of the faith prohibit excavations to obtain positive proof.

Activation: A hero must wear the armor in a fight. During the engagement, the hero must suffer a melee attack with a raise but take no damage from the blow. (He may Soak any damage and still meet this requirement.)

POWERS

Swordbreaker is a suit of plate armor. As such, it grants +3 Armor.

* **Spell (Seasoned); No Restriction (5):** Weapons striking the armor may break, as if subjected to a *blade-breaker* spell. The armor has a d8 arcane skill and d6 Wild Die for this purpose only. Roll for the *bladebreaker* effect before rolling any damage—if the weapon breaks, no damage is rolled. This power only functions if a hero wears the entire suit. (Heroes can't share the spoils by dividing the pieces among them.)

WHISPER

Realm: Land of Water

Status: Minor; 2 points; 10 Glory

Description: Whisper is an ordinary-looking katana, the sort carried by common samurai.

History: Two centuries ago, Chinuzo Shoru was born a samurai of the Dragon Shogunate. His service was cut short and he became a ronin, a masterless samurai, when his daimyo was slain by 47 conspirators. He spent the next ten years tracking each of the vile villains down and demanding honor be satisfied in his dead lord's name in the time-honored tradition of an iaijutsu draw. Forty

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seven times his blade slid silently from its scabbard and cut through the air like a whisper, and 47 men dropped dead. Honor satisfied, Chinuzo turned to the last guilty person on his list—himself. For failing to defend his lord's life, the young samurai committed ritual suicide.

What became of his blade is unknown, for Chinuzo died at the side of a road. Legends say that it has a habit when a great wrong has been committed. Unfortunately for those who would seek it, the blade has a reputation for demanding its owners end their own lives once their quest is complete.

Activation: The blade must be used in a duel in which the character is defending the honor of someone of higher social station than themselves but who cannot defend their own honor. The hero must win the duel and slay his opponent in a single strike.

POWERS

* **Damage Bonus; Specific (iaijutsu duels) (1):** Whisper inflicts an additional +1d6 damage when used in an iaijutsu duel.

* **Edge (Novice); Specific (iaijutsu duels) (1):** Whisper grants the Quick Draw, but only in iaijutsu duels.

* **Edge (Veteran); Specific (only if honor has been slighted) (3):** The relic grants the Iaijutsu Master Edge, but only in duels where the hero is defending his honor. It does not function if the character is challenged to a duel because he besmirched another's honor.

* **Minor Hindrance (-2):** Whisper's owner gains the Death Wish Hindrance.

THE WOODEN SWORD

Realm: Al-Shirkuh

Status: Major; 10 points; 50 Glory

Description: Although it has the same dimensions and shape as a scimitar, the Wooden Sword, as the name implies, is carved from a single piece of wood.

History: Scavengers have plagued Rassilon for 65 years, but the metallic bugs have troubled the denizens of Al-Shirkuh for over 150 years. One of the few survivors of the Battle of the Vultures' Feast, driven half-mad by the carnage he witnessed, returned home, carved a scimitar from wood, and promptly devoted his life to avenging his fallen comrades.

No one recalls the name of the Wooden Sword's creator, nor are there any records of how many Scavengers he smashed to pieces (or how he survived the resulting explosion). There are, however, witnesses to the devastation he wrought upon them before his life finally ended.

Rumors abound the Wooden Sword still lies in the desert, waiting to be claimed and out to use. Others claim it is lost, buried forever by the shifting dunes or looted by sand goblins, hyaenidae, Bedu, or whoever else the rumormonger wishes to slight.

With a little reworking of the story, the Wooden Sword could easily be transplanted to Rassilon. Chalcis has suf-

fered the most from Scavenger attacks, so it makes the ideal location for its creation and possible location.

Activation: The Wooden Sword must be used to inflict a wound on a Scavenger before any of its power manifest.

POWERS

Against creatures other than Scavengers, the Wooden Sword is treated as a large club and inflicts Str+d6 damage. Wielded against Scavengers, it inflicts Str+d8 damage and ignores all armor.

* **Ignore Armor; General (Scavengers) (8):** Ignores all armor when attacking a Scavenger.

* **Increased Damage Die; General (Scavengers) (2):** Inflicts Str+d8 damage against Scavengers.

ZUBAR'S LEG

Realm: Al-Shirkuh

Status: Lesser; 8 points; 40 Glory

Description: A fully jointed (even down to the toes) artificial leg made from thin metal.

History: Zubar, so it is said, was born with only one leg (accounts differ as to which one he was missing). A beggar by trade, his life changed when a stranger asked him what he would do if he had two legs. After some thought, Zubar replied that he would run like the wind and jump like a frog, for he had never done such simple things before.

The stranger returned the next day with an artificial leg and gifted it to Zubar. Although it took the beggar a little time to get used to having two legs, storytellers say that he did indeed run like the wind and jump like a frog. He became renowned for his athletic feats, and even displayed his prowess to the emir, who was so astonished he made Zubar a rich man.

As old age approached, Zubar freely gave his leg to a one-legged beggar, saying that he was born with one leg and would face the gods in the form he was made. Storytellers say the leg is passed from beggar to beggar to this day, though in which city it might be found that their tongues, for once, silent.

Activation: The leg need simply be strapped to an existing stump. The user swaps his One Leg Hindrance for Lameness as normal. The relic awakens when worn by the same person every day for one month (32 days).

POWERS

* **Edge (Novice); No Restriction (4):** Whoever wears the artificial leg gains the Fleet-Footed Edge.

* **Improved Trait; Specific (jumping only) (2):** The relic's wearer has his Strength increased by one die, but only for the purposes of jumping rolls.

* **Remove Major Hindrance; Inherent Restriction (2):** Normally, a character with a prosthetic leg swaps the One Leg Hindrance for Lameness. The wearer of this relic removes the Lameness—his artificial leg functions exactly as a real limb.

STORIES & STORYTELLERS



Whether huddled around a campfire in the frozen north, seated in a noble's court, or enjoying the comforts of an ale-hall or coffee house, citizens enjoy a good story. Told well, a story can remind folk of better times, rekindle their drive, fill their hearts with pride, sorrow, or happiness, take listeners to new lands, and temporarily dispel thoughts of hardships ahead. This chapter looks both at storytellers and the stories they tell.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Although many citizens of Rassilon refer to practitioners of song magic as *skalds*, that usage is highly misleading. *Skald* is merely a Saxa word for an entertainer, and any musician, poet, or teller of tales might be labelled as one, regardless of his magical knowledge. The word comes from Auld Saxa, and means "voice." Though every race and culture in Rassilon has its own terms, *skald* has entered the Trader parlance and is the most widely used term for any storyteller, singer, or poet.

The Anari equivalent is a *scop*. Tuomi are entertained by *bards*, and engros by *djilgilabno* (literally "one who speaks stories"). Hearth elves have *file* (pronounced "fee-lee"), while taiga elves have *felis* ("fel-iz"). Both translate roughly as "memory stirrer." Frost dwarf *skalds* are known as a *skalliz* ("one who recites").

Skalds may also carry a title to differentiate their specialty. *Skaldmærl* literally means "poet-maiden." Normally it refers to a female *skald*, but it can be used as an insult to a male *skald*, insinuating his stories are only good for women's ears. *Jarlaskald* is a title carried by *skalds* who are part of a jarl's retinue. *Daðaskald*, which means "skald of deeds" is mainly used by adventuring *skalds*, though it is also used by those who tell the tales of living heroes.

The Auld Saxa for song magic is *galdr*. Although the word simply means "spell," it refers specifically to an enchantment brought about by singing. Its practitioners were called *galdrmadbr* ("spell man") and *galdrkona* ("spell woman").

TERM DEFINITIONS

For ease, the word *storyteller* in this supplement refers to any character of any race or culture who has *skald* or *storyteller* as his archetype, is a song or *sha'ir* mage, or is a cleric of *Galdraföðr* or *Isimud*. At the GM's discretion, it can equally apply to any character who has invested dice in *Knowledge (Folklore)*. Remember, without *Folklore*, a hero knows only the basic tales of his homeland by means of *Common Knowledge*. He lacks the specific details and/or training to be a good storyteller.

Whenever capitalized *Folklore* is mentioned it refers to the *Knowledge (Folklore)* skill. The shorter form is used for brevity. A *storyteller's* repertoire may include stories, tales, songs, poems, ballads, allegories, and other such terms. We use "story" and "tale" in the text simply for convenience.

● STORY WEAVING ●

Storytelling is more than just a means of mass entertainment. Stories are a means of passing on historical facts, providing moral instruction, praising patrons, mocking others, and keeping the names of heroes alive. This section looks at creating tales, and telling them.

Note that music as an art form is very rare outside religious ceremonies. *Storytellers* do play instruments, but they do not play instrumentals. Music is used sparing and as an accompaniment to a story as a means of enhancing or altering the listener's mood to match the narrative.

LEARNING THE TALE

Before a *storyteller* can tell a story, he first needs to learn it. In the game world, *storytellers* acquire new stories through a long process of listening, memorization of the salient facts, the creation of mnemonics to jog their memory, and constant repetition. In game terms, characters receive *Story Points* with which to purchase specific stories.

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A starting character's initial Story Points are equal to his Smarts and Folklore dice. For instance, a character with Smarts d6 and Folklore d6 begins with 12 points. With these, he purchases stories based on two criteria—the focus of the tale and its complexity. These points do not have to be spent during character generation.

The number in parenthesis below is the amount of Story Points required to learn the specific tale.

These tales are not the only one's a storyteller knows. Most have dozens of stories at their disposal. However, those created using the system below are the one's the storyteller has mastered to perfection, and thus are his showpieces.

FOCUS

There is no such thing as a universal story. Every culture, nation, race, and cult has its own unique stories, and even tales with a common theme have a local bent. For instance, one may find tales of the Blizzard War in most lands, but these do not recount the entire epic struggle. Rather, they focus on local events and heroes. Other stories have their origins in distant lands, and events may be meaningless to other audiences. For instance, much of the Hearthlands was unaffected by both the Golem War and the rise of the Liche-Priest, and the Hearth Knights are largely unknown in southern realms.

A story's focus can be local, national, cultural, or religious, as explained below. In all cases, the specific focus must be clearly defined when the tale is learned. Stories with a narrow scope are easier to learn (as there are fewer variants), but appeal to a limited audience. Conversely, stories with a wide scope take much longer to master, but appeal to a wider audience.

Local (1): These tales relate to one very specific and well-defined place. Typically this is a single settlement, though that can range in size from a lone temple to an entire city. The founding of Scayle's Dragon Guard is a local story.

National (2): The story concerns one entire country. Borders are lines on maps, not barriers to communication. As such, national stories may be known in parts of neighboring lands. For instance, King Geirmund's return to claim the throne of Nordmark is a national story, but is also told in Eastern Royalmark (from where he launched his attack), Northern Midmark (which lies close to the scene of intense fighting), and Western Ostmark (where refugees fled during the short war).

Organizational (2): The story focuses on the activities of a specific organization. Such tales tend to gloss over the hero's culture and race in favor of his brave deeds, making them more universal in acceptance. This focus may be combined with another focus. For instance, *The Siege of Watchgap Fort* is both a National (Helgioland) story, and one focusing on the Hearth Knights.

Religious (2): The story narrative is based on the activities of a specific cult or cult member. Wherever the cult has worshippers, some version of the story is known. Most religious myths fall into this focus category.

This focus may be combined with one of those above,

widening its appeal at the expense of making it more complex to learn. For instance, the story of the chalk dragon at Torton in Midmark (see adventure *VI: The Heart of Winter*) is both Religious (Thunor) and National (Midmark). The story can be learned as either purely Religious or National in focus by leaving out certain elements and focusing on others.

Cultural (4): The story concerns the activities of a specific non-human race or human culture. No matter where the race or culture is found, the story, or at least some variant of it, is known. Remember that terms like Anari, Hadaree, and Saxa are catch-all titles for disparate groups of people—the inhabitants of specific lands, and cities in Al-Shirkuh, have their own specific cultures, even if they share common traits or heritage.

Tales concerning the Saxa rebellion against the Anari, the founding of the Al-Wazir Sultanate, and the actions of the High Cyning of the Marklands would fall into this category.

COMPLEXITY

Stories differ in both the time it takes to recite them and the complexity of the plot. Short or simple stories are much easier to learn, though audiences may not appreciate the brief entertainment. Conversely, long or complex stories take much longer to memorize and tell, but are more likely to enthrall an audience as they wait to how the narrative unfolds.

Simple (1): The story is short or lacks plot complexity. Typically, it lasts between half an hour and an hour.

Moderate (2): These stories have a longer narrative or more complex narrative. They last between one and two hours.

Epic (4): The tale comprises many elements, some of which are unrelated to the main plot, or has a complex plot that unravels slowly. Epics take between two and four hours to retell.

NAMING THE TALE

No player is expected to actually write an epic along the lines of *Beowulf* or suddenly become an expert on the historical events and personalities of *Hellfrost*. The basics of any story can be summed up with a name, and a brief description of the narrative. We've included examples later in the supplement to help get players' imaginations started.

EXAMPLE OF STORY CREATION

Sveingarth, a young Saxa skald from Royalmark, has studied hard at the feet of his mentors. He has Smarts d8 and Folklore d8, meaning he begins play with stories totaling 16 Story Points.

For his first story he wants to recount the tale of the Battle of Torn Ground, in which Vestmark's army was destroyed by the emerging orcs. Though a sorrowful tale, it is used to fill the hearts of listeners with righteous rage

against the fell orcs and reminds them they are fighting for their very cultural survival. He calls the story *The Song of Bitter Tears*. The story is known to all Saxa (Cultural), and his version is embellished (Moderate). This costs him 6 Story Points.

Next he chooses *The Rising of the Storm Dragon*, which details the rediscovery of a chalk dragon in Midmark. This is a National (Midmark) story with a Religious (Thunor) bent, and is a simple version. This costs a total of 5 points, leaving the skald with 5 Story Points.

His third tale is a comical one, *The Adventures of Olaf No-Sword*. The basic narrative concerns a would-be hero who has a series of humorous misadventures that teach him that staying at home is the best idea. This is a Simple National (Royalmark) tale and costs 3 Story Points.

Finally, Sveingarth learns the tale of *Ring-giver*, the outlaw robbing the rich of Tingvoll in Vestmark. This is a Local story (Tingvoll) and has a Simple storyline. This uses his remaining 2 Story Points.

LEARNING NEW TALES

Storytellers are continually learning new stories. Some they pick up on their travels. Others are ones they learned long ago, but are still memorizing or practicing the telling to as to produce the greatest impact on the audience. Each time he advances, a storyteller gains new Story Points equal to half the *lowest* of his Smarts die or Folklore die. Low Smarts means the storyteller struggles to memorize tales, while low Folklore indicates a scant knowledge of the many tales in existence and a fundamental problem in turning them into exciting dramas. These points can be used immediately on simple tales, or saved up and combined with later awards to master an epic.

TELLING THE TALE

In game terms, recounting a general story calls only for a single Folklore roll. Beyond an appreciative or bored audience, there are no special consequences. When a storyteller wishes to tell one of his best stories, he can use the expanded system presented below.

These rules use the Social Conflict rules from the core *Savage Worlds* book. For convenience, every story, no matter its length or complexity, is divided into three acts of equal duration. Each act thus equates to one round of social conflict. Each round, the storyteller rolls his Folklore and applies the following modifiers. Each success and raise on the roll earns the storyteller one success (best marked by tokens).

MODIFIERS

Story Focus	Modifier
Local	+2/-4
National	+1/-2
Cultural	+0/-1
Organizational	+1/-2
Religious	+1/+0*

Complexity	Modifier
Simple	-1
Moderate	+0
Epic	+1
Charisma	Modifier
Storyteller's Charisma	+/-X
Language**	Modifier
Story told in unknown language	-4
Story told in Sandspeech or Trader	-2
Story told in dominant language	+0
Magic	Modifier
Uses subtle magic to enhance tale	+1/-1

* *Al-Shirkub* is a land divided along religious lines. Telling a story involving the gods to a majority Devoted audience earns a -2 penalty, as does telling a story concerning the Devoted creed to the Faithful.

** Highest modifier applies.

Focus (Local, National, Cultural): Audiences to whom a specific tale directly relates are most appreciative of the story. They already know some of the background details, many may have visited key sites mentioned in the narrative, and everyone loves to cheer a local hero. Elsewhere, though, such tales are met with less enthusiasm. Names of people and places may be meaningless to them, forcing the storyteller to skip over them or go into elaboration that ruins the rhythm of his tale, local in-jokes fly over their heads, and certain racial or national prejudices may apply.

Focus (Organizational): As noted elsewhere, stories concerning organizations focus more on the deeds of the hero than his culture or race, widening their appeal.

Focus (Religion): Religious stories about the gods or strong religious elements within a larger narrative concerning mortal heroes transcend racial and cultural biases—such tales are usually moral tales. If a story contains a Religious focus in combination with a Local, National, or Cultural focus, the storyteller may voluntarily drop the other focus in lands where it might not appeal, instead playing up the religious aspect of the story.

With regard Focus modifiers, the first modifier is applied when the tale is told in the specific locale or nation, or where more than half the members are of the relevant culture or faith, as applicable. The second is applied if the tale is told outside its geographical location, or to an audience where the majority is of a different culture or faith (*Al-Shirkub* being an exception to the latter due to its religious divide). Some leeway should be given for neighboring lands close to the focus of the story or where the deity in question is listed as a popular one. In such places, there is usually neither a bonus nor penalty.

The sole exception to this is Organizational. Penalties apply in areas where the organization is little known or where it is not welcomed. For example, stories regarding *Hearth Knights* do not sit well with the frostborn denizens of the Barony of Cul, and in much of the southern *Hearthlands* their existence is largely unknown. The bonus is gained in areas where the organization is prevalent or much-loved.

HEROES IN STORIES

As written, until a hero acquires the Immortalized in Song Glory award (minimum of 100 Glory) his exploits are not the stuff of storytellers' songs or poems. With these new rules, GMs have the option of allowing lesser tales to evolve earlier. This does not change the requirements for the award, nor does it allow it to be taken earlier—there have been many hundreds of folk heroes down the ages, and most fade into obscurity or become merged with other legends. Those who are remembered invariably begin as local heroes, their fame slowly spreading along the trade roads. Most stories usually come about only when the hero is dead, which is why being Immortalized in Song while still alive carries several benefits and is hard to acquire.

When a hero has taken Heroic Status three times, a storyteller may write a Local story about him. Taken a fourth time transforms his endeavors into a National, Organizational, or Religious story. Only when he takes Immortalized in Song does he become a Cultural hero (the best he can hope for) and truly earn his immortality. In all instances, the focus must specifically relate to a mighty deed carried out in or on behalf of the focus.

For instance, a hero who spends most of his time in Helgioland isn't going to become a Local hero in Bridgewater, even if he performs one major deed there (the one that earns him the privilege). Since his primary focus was in Helgioland, that must be where his story begins.

Note that being mentioned in a story does not enhance one's Glory further. Rather, it prevents the hero's name from diminishing.

For instance, if Sveingarth relates *The Rising of the Storm Dragon* in Midmark, where the tale is set, he earns a +1 bonus. If more than half the audience have Thunor as their patron, he earns another +1. If he travels to Angmark and tells the same story he earns a -2 penalty for being in the wrong nation. Whether he earns a religious bonus there depends on the make up of the audience. In neighboring parts of the Crystalflow Confederacy and Nordmark he likely earns no bonus (the story does not concern their people), but similarly no penalty is imposed (the story is local enough to be known).

If the story has multiple Focuses, the storyteller may voluntarily ignore one when telling the tale. This is done most often when the audience is not of the relevant type, thus allowing the storyteller to ignore any associated penalty. A storyteller recounting *The Battle of Bones* (see p. 28) in eastern Seithrby, for instance, might play down the role of the Deathdealers (who are little known in the region) but emphasize the role of the cult of Scaetha.

Stories modified in this manner are abridged versions, however, and thus are shorter. The story's Complexity

drops one level. Simple stories, no matter their number of focuses, cannot be shortened in this manner.

Complexity: Short stories don't take much time to tell and don't require much concentration. That isn't always a good thing—audiences may feel free to engage in small talk, knowing they can catch up with the simple plot later, and short narratives do not draw the audience in. Conversely, longer tales mean the audience has time to be immersed in the developing story, and complex plots force them to focus their attention lest they miss an important detail.

The storyteller may always choose to recite an abridged version of any story he knows by voluntarily lowering the Complexity. While this lowers the modifier, it may be required if he lacks the time to tell the full story.

Charisma: Storytellers are not just tellers of tales—they are solo actors, the focus for the entire audience. One who speaks in monotones or remains still attract less interest than one who puts on voices, produces sound effects, alters the tone of his voice to suit the mood, or is animated (such as mock fighting).

Racial stereotyping and prejudice, or a race's reluctance to open up to other races, apply here as normal for those with the Insular or Outsider Hindrances.

Language: Sandspeech and Trader may be near universal languages in their respective lands, but they were invented to facilitate trade and diplomacy. They are functional, allowing information to be transmitted quickly and clearly, rather than a tongue of poets. Cultural, national, and racial pride, not to mention lack of education, also mean audiences prefer to be entertained in their native tongue. The unknown language modifier applies only when more than half the audience does not speak the storyteller's language. Such instances are rare with regard to Sandspeech or Trader, but not unknown. For instance, Auld Saxa is the dominant tongue in rural Royalmark, with Saxa a distant second. Trader is virtually unknown. In this case, the higher penalty would be applied, even if the speaker was using Trader.

Magic: For the most part, audiences are not afraid of magic. While there are dangerous spells, mages have long been accepted as part of daily life. This is especially true of song magic. Indeed, audiences expect a storyteller to use gentle or subtle magical effects to enhance the experience. Where magic is appreciated, the storyteller receives a bonus. Where it is not, such as in the Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh, he has a penalty. For ease, there is no need to specify the exact spell being used. The storyteller simply makes an arcane skill roll each round he wants to try and use magic. The Siphoning applies as normal.

Other Modifiers: GMs may impose other modifiers based on the particular story and the audience as they see fit. For instance, telling Vestmark's peasants the tale of Ring-giver is likely to appeal to them, but it would be bad etiquette to recount his actions in the royal court, or while entertaining a nobleman whose home the thief has plundered. In such circumstances, the GM may swap the usual +1 bonus for a National story told in the relevant nation into the -2 penalty.

RESULTS

At the end of the recital, the storyteller counts up the number of successes/tokens and compares them to the table below to see how the audience reacted to his recital.

Successes	Result
None	The storyteller has bored or offended his audience. The initial Reaction drops by one level (min. Hostile).
1-2	The audience is polite, but the storyteller has done nothing to win their friendship or trust. The initial reaction is unchanged.
3-4	The audience is greatly appreciative of the tale, and the storyteller wins many admirers. The initial Reaction improves one level (max. Helpful).
5+	The storyteller is met with rapturous applause, loud cheers, and so on. The initial Reaction improves two levels (max. Helpful).

The initial Reaction should be determined by the Game-master based on local events and circumstances or set at Neutral. Modifiers to this based on the storytelling affect only the storyteller. Each month, the penalty moves one step back toward its default. When the default is reached, the storyteller's reputation is unaffected—another storyteller has won the locals' hearts, insults are forgotten, events have created a new focus of attention, and such like.

OTHER RULES

The rules below are optional and their use is at the GM's discretion.

LEADERSHIP EDGES

As mentioned in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*, Leadership Edges adequately handle a storyteller's ability to inspire allied troops through song and poem. This rule also applies to Edges designed for use in Mass Battles. For instance, A Few Good Men can be seen as a rousing story designed to get the men into a fighting mood, Death Before Dishonor is a tale that steadies their nerve, and Siege Breaker keeps spirits high during a lengthy siege.

Unfortunately, while few skirmish-level Edges require much in the way of Knowledge (Battle), the skill becomes an essential requirement of Leadership Edges designed for use in Mass Battles. In order that storytellers better be able to use these Edges with the trapping of songs and stories, the GM may wish to allow them to exchange Knowledge (Battle) for Persuasion.

Not every Leadership Edge can be easily explained away as an inspiring song (one case is Tactician), and GMs retain the right to prohibit specific Edges from this rule if they feel the change doesn't fit.

STORYTELLING CONTESTS

Storytellers are professional entertainers, patronized by rich nobles and beloved of downtrodden peasants, but telling stories is a universal pastime the length and breadth of the continent, an activity enjoyed by young and old alike. Storytelling competitions are very popular, especially at fairs and festivals, and attract large crowds. Such endeavors may be a small part of a wider contest, or the sole focus of the gathering.

Although open to anyone, they allow storytellers a chance to display their skills and knowledge, and triumph over their rivals. Three systems are presented below.

Simple: Most contests can be handled by a simple Folklore roll. Whoever rolls highest wins the contest and claims any prize offered. The poetry contest in adventure *N5: The Eostre Festival* uses this simple system. Such contests usually last only a few hours.

Moderate: GMs looking for a more detailed system might wish to look at the Social Conflict rules. Instead of a single die roll, Folklore is rolled over three rounds. This gives those trailing after the first roll a chance to win back the crowd's attention by upping their game. Whoever has the most tokens after three rounds wins. Ties are handled by a single Folklore roll. Contests may last one hour, several hours, or an entire day per round.

Epic: The third option takes longer to run, and is best reserved for serious situations or where the contest forms part of a larger adventure. Contestants begin with 3 tokens, and gain one additional token for each die in Folklore above d4. Those using Common Knowledge gain one token for each die in Smarts above d6—they know only basic, common tales.

Each round, the contestants roll Folklore as normal. Success gains them an additional token, and a raise two tokens. At the end of each round, whoever has the lowest number of tokens must make a Spirit roll with a penalty equal to the difference between his tokens and the contestant with the next highest amount or drop out. Should two or more contestants have the same lowest number of tokens, each rolls with no penalty. This may result in both dropping out. The contest ends when there is only one contestant left.

As above, such contests may last for hours or days, depending on the needs of the GM. If used as part of an adventure, then days might be best. This way one of the contestants can be kidnapped between rounds, and the heroes charged with finding and rescuing him before the next round begins.

STORYTELLING SCHOOLS

Normally, a hero gains 5 Glory whenever he achieves a new Rank. This award covers dozens of trivial and miscellaneous adventures the hero has undertaken outside of true adventures. Instead of undertaking these small quests, a storyteller may opt to spend his downtime at a center of study, at the home of another storyteller, or mastering stories he already knows. By forfeiting the

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Glory award, the storyteller gains a number of bonus Story Points. How many Story Points are earned depends on where and how the storyteller studies, as detailed below. These are in addition to the number gained for reaching a new advancement opportunity.

In order to attend a school and benefit, the storyteller must gain at least half of the Experience Points he needs to reach a new Rank close to the school. How close is left to the GM to determine, but we suggest no more than a few day's hard ride (about 150 miles). This gives the storyteller ample opportunities to visit when not adventuring. GMs are free to waive this requirement as they see fit, but they should not allow every hero to suddenly become a student at a university, especially if they are based in some far-flung corner of the land.

Self-Taught: Academies and mentors are not easy to find, especially in remote lands. A storyteller with no access to any formal training may exchange the 5 Glory for 2 Story Points.

Mentor or Minor Center: By learning at the feet of another storyteller or at a place where storytellers gather, the hero can exchange his 5 Glory Points for 4 Story Points.

Moderate Center: These places specifically cater to storytellers and typically exist only in major towns and cities. The best known examples in Rassilon are the Entertainers' Guild in Spyre and the temple of Galdraðöör at Scathmoor. In Al-Shirkuh, any university except those listed below that teaches Folklore counts. The 5 Glory can be exchanged for 7 Story Points.

Major Center: Only four major centers exist—Three Notes Academy in Scathmoor, the School of Entertainers in Jizah, the Storytellers' School in Qarah, and the University of Entertainers in Tamarah. The 5 Glory points are exchanged for 10 Story Points. None of these locations teach stories for free. Each time a hero wishes to gain Story Points at one he must pay 200 gs or dinars.

● SAMPLE TALES ●

Every community, race, culture, cult, and organization has its own stories. Some are unique, others are variants on common themes, events, places, or people. No storyteller could ever hope to master more than a handful of the myriad stories, and no scholar has come close to recording even a tiny percentage of them. What follows is a very short sample of stories great and small.

GMs and players seeking more inspiration for tales need only browse through the entries in the previous chapter, or flick through the *Hellfrost Gazetteer* or *Atlas*—both volumes contain dozens of references to events, gods, and heroes (some of which can be found below) that can be turned into stories suitable for recitals.

AETHLING'S TALE, THE

Focus: National (Seithrby); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4

Created only in the last 20 years by the direct order of Aethling Cuthwulf Eodricsunu, this tale is virtually unknown outside of Seithrby. It tells how mighty Cuthwulf and his loyal followers set sail from their homeland on the western shore of White Lake to liberate their Saxa cousins from the yoke of Anari slavery. In return for their freedom, the people honored him with the title of aethling and vowed to obey him as their lord. The story then goes to describe his generous largesse, his skill at hunting, and his magical prowess.

The story is blatant propaganda, as every local knows, but that is actually the intended purpose. The aethling knows full well his people know the truth, but Cuthwulf is creating an idealized version of his life story that will be retold to generations yet to come, thus ensuring he is remembered as he wants to be remembered rather than as the man he actually is.

BATTLE OF BLACK WATER, THE

Focus: Local (Scayle); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 2

This story recounts the epic deed of Sir Aethwald, founder of the Dragon Guard. In its fledgling years, the village was at the mercy of a gigantic marsh dragon. Fortunately for the settlers, a passing knight, Sir Aethwald ap-Herrith, slew the beast in a titanic combat lasting many days. As a reward, the villagers granted him the title of baron and swore fealty to him. The dragon's glittering black-green scales were used to roof the new baronial manor (and led to the renaming of the village) and its skull became his high seat. To safeguard Scayle against further attacks, Baron Aethwald created the Dragon Guard, a small band of men and women who would specialize in the slaying of marsh dragons and marsh orms.

BATTLE OF BONES, THE

Focus: Organizational (Deathdealers), Religious (Scaetha); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 6

In 361 IR, a force of undead emerged from the Withered Lands and made their way west toward the Draugr Hills, where they sought to create a new base of power. As they neared Angmark, they found their path blocked by a small army made up of clerics of Scaetha, their gravetouched allies, and a contingent of warriors from Angmark. For an entire day the battle raged, the humans' ranks thinning by the hour but their shieldwall never breaking. Depending on the audience, the story places greater emphasis on the actions of the cult of Scaetha or the gravetouched warriors who would later become the founding members of the Deathdealers.

BATTLE OF VULTURES' FEAST, THE

Focus: National (pick Caliphate, Free Emirates, or Sultanate); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4*

The Battle of Vultures' Feast, fought in 394 CJ, involved an alliance of soldiers from the Caliphate, Free Emirates,

and Sultanate. As a result, the story is well known in all these lands. As with all such stories, though, the narrative is shaped to suit the audience. Thus, the Caliphate version of the story makes their soldiers braver and their officers less responsible for the disaster, and names key individuals and events. Depending on the mood of the audience, blame for the disaster may be thrown on one of the other nations. Last Water Oasis, which still suffers Scavenger privations, is treated as being part of the Sultanate for the purposes of telling this story.

** A storyteller who knows one version can learn another version for an extra 2 Story Points.*

BJORNWULF

Focus: Cultural (Saxa); **Complexity:** Epic; **Story Points:** 8

In the early days of the Blizzard War, Shattered Moor was attacked by a great host of barbaric men who lived as bears and of insane berserkers who fell on the land like a plague. Thirteen Saxa nobles from Haldalund answered the summons to war. Their journey was long, their quest arduous, for their foes knew no fear and seemed without number. In the end, the hero Bjornwulf, leader of the thirteen warriors, slew the chieftain of the barbarians, breaking their resistance and sending the survivors howling into the northern wastes.

It was two years before the survivors returned home, and in that time the Hellfrost armies had ravaged Haldalund. The battle-weary nobles returned home not to warm steads and welcoming kinsmen, but to devastation and death. Having lost everything but their swords, the eight survivors, for five had fallen in the completion of their quest, swore an oath of everlasting brotherhood and vengeance. To honor their fallen comrades, they vowed that their ranks would never exceed 13 members.

BRON

Focus: National (Chalcis); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4

The story goes that Chalcis, untouched by the hand of death that stretched from the east in the days of the Liche-Priest, refused to assist its neighbors, its governor convinced that to raise a hand against the Dark Marshal was to invite destruction. Bron, a simple farm boy, spoke out against this injustice, claiming that in this darkest hour, when humanity's existence flickered like a candle, all men were brothers.

At dawn, as the Aspirian and Drachenlander armies prepared for the final conflict, scouts reported a sea of banners approaching from the southwest—the Chalcians were coming! The two sides clashed in the Haunted Hills, mortal and unliving locked in a deadly struggle whose outcome would shape the future of the northern continent. One version of the poem claims Bron, fearless above all men, sought out the Dark Marshal and challenged him to single combat. Bron and the Dark Marshal fought, with the mortal emerging victorious.

EMIR AND THE VIRTUOUS WIFE, THE

Focus: National (Al-Wazir Sultanate); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4

While the name of the emir involved changes to suit the audience, the core of the story remains the same. An emir, staring out from his tower, caught sight of a beautiful woman in the market below. In a series of short narratives he offers her flowers, spices, clothes, and gems to convince her to leave her husband, an ugly and poor man. Rebuffed each time, the emir then moves on to more drastic steps, such as having her evicted from her family home and even threatening to execute her husband. In the end, the woman's love for her husband wins out—the emira ends his advances toward the woman and rewards her and her husband with a noble title.

FIRST AGE OF SPRING, THE

Focus: Cultural (Elves); **Complexity:** Epic; **Story Points:** 8*

This lengthy, and by the standards of other races dull, story tells of a more innocent time, an age when the elves first stepped into the world and began to tend the forests, and the world was full of wonder and joy. It is a blend of myth and fact, mentioning many elven heroes but also claiming that Eostre walked among the elves as their mentor.

As lengthy as it is, the tale is only the first chapter in the even more epic Cycle of the Ages, a mostly historical work that describes the first three seasons of the eternal cycle of life as known to the hearth elves (who hold that they are currently standing between the First Fall and First Winter Ages). The division between the hearth and taiga elves signaled the start of the First Age of Fall.

** This story is set before the separation of the hearth and taiga elves and is thus common to both races.*

FISHERMAN AND THE MARID, THE

Focus: Religious (Devoted); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 3

One day a poor fisherman cast his net into waters. He hauled in not fish, but planks of wood. He took these back to his house to dry and used them for firewood, though he had nothing to cook. The next day he hauled up blocks of stone, which he used to mend his house, though he had nothing worth protecting. The story continues in this manner until it reaches its climax.

After casting his net once more, a marid rose from the water and spoke to the fisherman. It told him the material he had been catching was rubbish from the marid's underwater home. Rather than returning it to the sea and continuing his hunt for fish, the fisherman had done the jinni a favor by taking it away, even though that meant he went hungry. As a reward for his help, the jinni gifted the mortal a bag of pearls each the size of an eyeball.

The story has a moral bent for Devoted—one never knows when one is doing a good act and even seemingly

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trivial acts can lead to great rewards. Many imams, keen to prevent people becoming corrupted by doing deeds for material gain, insist the bag of pearls is a metaphor for Oneness rather than an actual material reward.

FLATULENT THIEF, THE

Focus: Local (pick a city); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 2*

The tale of the Flatulent Thief is rare in that every major city has a version. To best appease the audience, the storyteller makes use of local knowledge concerning people, places, and events, both modern and historical.

Told properly and with the necessary sound effects, it is guaranteed to have an audience in stitches. It recounts a young thief who, after robbing a greater jinni, was cursed with chronic flatulence whenever he committed a crime. The story is basically a series of humorous anecdotes, all of which end with the thief being caught because of the loud noise he emitted while plying his nefarious trade.

Traditionally, the ending is left open, prompting the audience to demand to know the thief's fate. The storyteller admits he does not know, and that the thief may still be at large, whereupon he commits an act of witnessed thievery (such as swiping food off a plate), promptly followed by a very loud fart.

** A storyteller who knows one version automatically knows another for his home city (assuming he comes from a city, of course) and for each city in which he has d4+ in Knowledge (Area). A general Area skill, such as Caliphate, does not count—the storyteller lacks the necessary in-depth local knowledge. If he wishes to learn a version for a city he knows nothing about, he must pay 1 Story Point.*

FRUITLESS SEARCH, THE

Focus: Local (Drakeport); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 3

Only the gods know how many explorers have tunneled beneath the city in search of the fabled golden dragon statue. No definitive version of the story exists, for it is not based on any one event. Instead, storytellers weave together the misfortunes of dozens of treasure seekers into a single narrative, choosing mishaps they have heard of and that suit their style of storytelling. Many are comedic (the locals enjoy a good laugh at outsiders' expense), but others take a more serious approach. Invariably, storytellers begin the story by claiming that what follows is the truth and happened to someone they know.

GOBLIN WHO WORKED, THE

Focus: Cultural (Sand Goblins); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 5

Sand goblins appreciate a good story, so long as they aren't expected to pay for the privilege. A storyteller who

can win them over may find his pockets and pouches retain their contents.

The tale concerns a goblin who, unlike his peers strove to work hard. Each job he takes ends badly, with the unfortunate creature getting into worse and worse trouble. Eventually, he ends up on the executioner's block through no direct fault of his own. While the story has a serious side as far as sand goblins are concerned, the anecdotes are always humorous.

HAMMER OF THE ORCS

Focus: Cultural (Frost Dwarves); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 6

The focus of this tale, Thegn Rungar Hammerhand, is unusual in that he is still alive. The tale begins with how his reputation was sorely dented after the orc invasion of Karad Marn. Undeterred, he led the defenders from the front, pushing back the orcs and securing a foothold within the vast subterranean city. It then tells of how he swore the Ancestor Pledge, a sacred vow that would condemn his soul to the Abyss if he failed to complete it.

Though he suffered many wounds, his resolve never faltered, nor did he ever pull back from battle and duty. His many deeds include the slaying of 20 orcs in a single fight and how he waded into the thick of a terrible skirmish and emerged without a scratch. As storytellers note, the tale has not yet ended, for 50 years and more have passed but still the thegn fights to free his home from the orcs' clutches.

HOW CATS CAME TO HAVE NINE LIVES

Focus: Religious (Tamarni); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4

It is widely accepted among the Faithful that cats have been blessed with nine lives, but not everyone knows how that came to pass. This story tells of the first cat, Tamarni's faithful companion. Through a series of unfortunate accidents, many of which are brought about by the animal's curiosity, it dies eight times. Each time, Tamarni rolled a die, resurrecting the beast if the roll went her way. On the ninth time, the animal's luck ran out and it remained dead.

Although primarily intended to amuse audiences, it contains a religious message—luck is a two-sided coin, and no streak of good or bad fortune lasts forever.

A Devoted version also exists. Unlike other stories, the narrative is completely different, requiring it to be learned as an entirely separate tale. In this version the cat earns its nine lives by tricking a greater jinni in various contests. The cat is eventually caught out and punished with curiosity, a trait guaranteed to ensure it quickly uses up its nine lives.

HYACINTH'S BUCKET

Focus: Cultural (Engros); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 5

Popular with children and adults alike, this comic story tells of Hyacinth, an engro whose only bucket had a hole in the bottom. It comprises a series of brief tales concerning fetching milk, watering the crops, removing night soil, and such like, each of which ends with the audience shouting out, "But the bucket was empty!"

LAST STAND, THE

Focus: National (Nerenel), Religious (Scaetha); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 6

In the foothills of the Liche Lands lies Last Stand Hill. Ambushed and surrounded by a great host of undead, a small force of clerics of Scaetha, mercenaries, and taiga elves held out for three days. Their numbers dwindling hour by hour against the relentless tide of walking death, they ended their days in a suicidal charge.

Though the story tells of a terrible loss, the death of the warriors was not without benefits. Their defiance prevented the Liche-Priest from mobilizing an entire army, and so saved the lives of many thousands of innocents.

LAY OF GEDWYNNE, THE

Focus: Cultural (Saxa); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 6

According to the poem, Gedwynne Erluksdohtor was a princess of Angmark. Beneath an appearance fair to men beat a dark heart, for she was vain and covetous. To achieve her dreams of immortality and power she turned to black magic and worship of Hela, sacrificing the last vestiges of her humanity. As a reward, Hela transformed her into the Witch Queen, a hag second in power only to the dread Liche-Priest.

LAY OF SIGEL, THE

Focus: National (Lakeland); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 3

A popular tale used to warn children of the dangers of trying to reach a tower that stands on a small island in Serpent Lake, it tells how a mighty army led by clerics of Sigel strode out onto the icy lake one winter. Intent on bringing the tower crashing down, the army fell through a thin crust of ice. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of men and horses froze to death in an instant. Their preserved corpses remain locked in the ice, rising to defend the tower only when mortals dare to cross their icy graves.

LAY OF THE HRIMTHURSAR, THE

Focus: National (The Battlelands); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4

The story of the frost giant invasion of the Battlelands in 381 IR exists only in the tales of skalds. Sorely pressed by a force of over 100 frost giants and 3,000 orcs, the 2,000 brave defenders seemed doomed. While the commanders dithered and considered retreat, a young Tuomi

warrior, Canaul, led a heroic charge. One hundred heads were cleaved by his keen blade, among them the frost giant jarl, who was defeated only after an epic duel. A recent addition to one variant of the tale claims Canaul was Tiw incarnate, something the cult of Tiw rejects.

MAN WHO WISHED, THE

Focus: Religious (Devoted); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 3

After releasing a jinni from its imprisonment in a lamp, Haroun was granted three wishes. He used the first to ask for wealth. The jinni disappeared in a puff of smoke, only to return with a sack of gold bars. Eager to spend his new wealth, Haroun went to the nearest city. Alas, the jinni had stolen the gold from the emir's vault and Haroun was thrown in jail as a thief. Haroun spoke his second wish and asked to be released from prison. Moments later the guards arrived to take him way to the execution block. Facing certain death, Haroun asked to be made immortal, so that the axe would not sever his neck, as his final wish. The jinni agreed and promptly transformed the hapless mortal into a pile of sand.

The moral of the story is two-fold. First, never trust a jinni. Second, be careful what you wish for, because you might just get it.

PILGRIM'S TALE, THE

Focus: Religious (pick one); **Complexity:** Epic; **Story Points:** 6

Versions of this rambling tale exist for every benevolent major deity, and each must be learned separately. The basic story is always the same—a recounting of the various adventures and misadventures of a pilgrim intent on visiting a sacred place. Comedic and serious in equal measure, the pilgrim's story is always one of overcoming adversity, learning humility, and never forgetting to honor the gods.

Every scenario within the greater narrative is specifically tailored to suit the pilgrim's faith. A storyteller who learns a version need know nothing about the faith in question, since he has memorized the basic facts of one version. However, trying to create a version for a different audience with only a passing knowledge of the faith risks losing many of the important subtleties.

PURPOSE OF THE PAUPER AND THE PORPOISE, THE

Focus: National (Free Emirate States); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 1

Invented purely to amuse and bemuse audiences in equal measure, this story is a series of short tales framed as tongue-twisters. Typically, the storyteller invites audience participation, giving them chance to display their verbal skills or, more likely, become the butt of jokes by their peers as they fail abysmally.

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SACK OF ASPER, THE

Focus: National (Aspiria); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4

Aspiria earned much glory for its steadfast defense against the forces of the Liche-Priest, but it has also suffered its share of hardship. The sack of Asper, the once great capital, in 342 IR by the rampaging golems was a hammer blow to the pride of Aspiria and a stark reminder that its continuing security is not guaranteed. The story is sometimes known as the Blinding of Sigel in memory of the grand temple to the sun god that was razed to the ground.

The tale does not speak of heroes or bravery—the defenders of Asper were caught by surprise and mounted only minimal defense before they were overwhelmed. Instead, it is a lament for the dead and a sorrowful reminder of the destruction wrought on the city on that fateful day.

SHIELD OF THE EMIRATES, THE

Focus: National (Free Emirate States); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4

One of the most popular stories in the Free Emirate States, this tale concerns the heroic exploits of Lu'ay. Full details can be found on page 13. Despite the passage of time, it is not popular with Anari audiences.

SORROW OF THE FROST DWARF AND THE SEVEN WIGHTS, THE

Focus: Cultural (Frost Dwarves); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 5

This sorrowful tale recounts the story of a frost dwarf icewood forester from Karad Zor. Lost in the Frozen Forest, he stumbled across forgotten ruins of dwarven design. Though seven frost wights drove him out, he caught sight of a fallen dwarf lord lying atop a bier and covered in a thin veil of ice. As he fled, he noticed the prostrate figure's chest gently rising and falling. The tale ends on a bitter note. The dwarves have long searched for the ruin, for it is believed the figure is none other than Karad Khan's lost king. None have yet succeeded, and until the truth is known the dwarves continue to mourn their lost king.

TALE OF THE EMIR'S CAMEL, THE

Focus: Local (Salih, City of Fire); **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 2

An abridged version of this popular story can be found in *Land of Fire* (p. 105).

TALE OF THE SIX BROTHERS, THE

Focus: Religious (Devoted); **Complexity:** Moderate; **Story Points:** 4

The story concerns six brothers who rescued a jinni

from an embarrassing predicament. As a reward, the jinni gifted them each a sack of gold. The story then tells the fate of each brother. Five of them used their money unwisely, succumbing to the sins of gluttony, vanity, addiction, sexual lust, and sloth. The sixth brother gave away his entire fortune to those less fortunate than himself and died a pauper. This is not the end of the story, though.

Surrounded by sycophants who cared only for their money, the first fifth brothers were cremated with no mourners in attendance. Worse, their tainted lives ensured Druj consumed them. The sixth brother, while poor, had many true friends to mourn his passing and achieved Oneness for his generosity and simple life.

VOYAGES OF SINBAD, THE

Focus: National (Al-Wazir Sultanate or Caliphate of Al-Shirkuh); **Complexity:** Epic; **Story Points:** 6*

The name of Sinbad is well known in both the Caliphate and Sultanate. His story, though, has been shaped to suit the ears of particular audiences, and thus two different versions exist.

The full epic details the famous mariner's seven great voyages and as many lesser voyages as the storyteller knows (no one knows them all, and many storytellers invent shorter adventures). Depending on the time he has available, the storyteller can voluntarily elect to reduce the Complexity to Moderate or Simple by reducing the number of voyages he recounts.

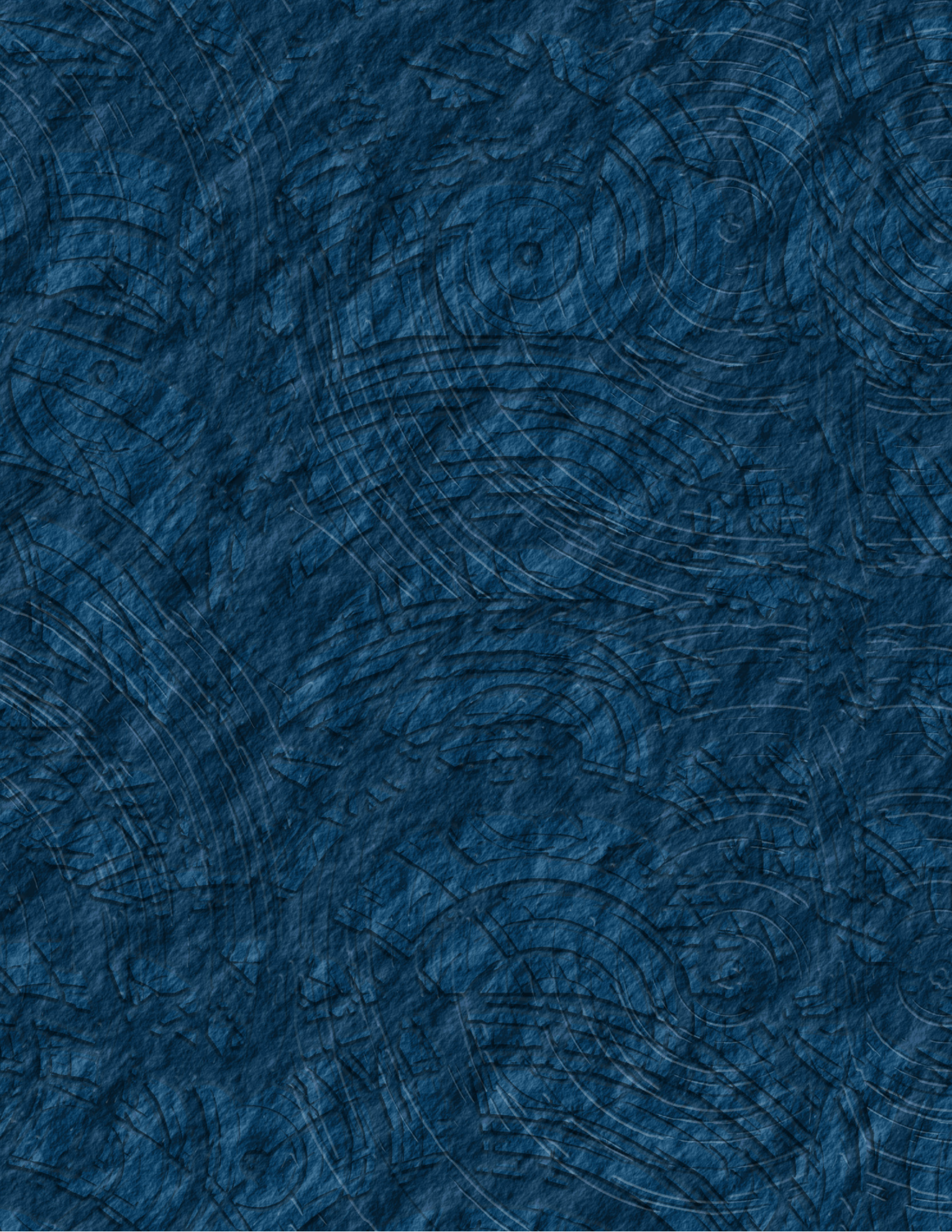
** A storyteller who knows one version can learn the second for an extra 2 Story Points. Because the tale is made up of many standalone parts, he can learn an abridged version rather than the full epic by choosing a lower Complexity when he first learns the tale. If he wishes to learn more later, he pays Story points equal to the difference between the version he knows and the version he wants to learn. However, unless he learns the full epic to start with, he must pay for the Caliphate and Sultanate versions separately. It is thus possible a storyteller might know a Simple Caliphate version and a Moderate Sultanate version of the epic.*

WHISPERING HUSCARLS, THE

Focus: National*; **Complexity:** Simple; **Story Points:** 3

The Whispering Huscarls are three standing stones leaning together to form a vertical triangle. Local legend has it that three huscarls once plotted to overthrow their lord. Neither the huscarls nor their master are named in any official records, leaving skalds to name them as they wish. Overheard by a cleric of Ertha as they huddled together and plotted their lord's death, the conspirators were promptly turned to stone for their treachery. The story is a moral one, a warning not to conspire against one's duly appointed lord or break vows of fealty.

** The Whispering Huscarls is a sample landmark mentioned in the Hellfrost Atlas. It has not been placed in any realm, leaving the GM to place it to suit his campaign.*



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